

Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik

Graduiertenkolleg
Minor Cosmopolitanisms

Édouard Glissant's Politics of Relation
Mapping an Intellectual Movement of Marronage

Dissertation
zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades der Philosophie (Dr. phil.)

eingereicht an der
Philosophischen Fakultät
der Universität Potsdam

von
Moses März

Datum der Disputation: Potsdam, den 3.11.2020

Unless otherwise indicated, this work is licensed under a Creative Commons License Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International. This does not apply to quoted content and works based on other permissions. To view a copy of this license visit:
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>

Dekan: Prof. Dr. Hans-Georg Wolf

Betreuerinnen und Gutachterinnen: Prof. Dr. Nicole Waller
Prof. Dr. Ina Kerner

Published online on the
Publication Server of the University of Potsdam:
<https://doi.org/10.25932/publishup-50948>
<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:kobv:517-opus4-509486>

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	i
Abbreviations.....	ii
Note on Languages and Translations.....	iii
List of Illustrations.....	iv
Preface.....	vi
Chapter 1: The Poet's Politics – Reading Glissant's Political Legacy as a Movement of Marronage	
1.0. Chapter Introduction.....	2
1.1. The Permeable Border Between Writing and Acting.....	6
1.2. Politics and the Political – Implications of a Conceptual Difference.....	20
1.2.1. 'Speaking about everything that constitutes a community' – Rediscovering the Political Essence of Politics.....	20
1.2.2. Jacques Rancière's Sensibility for the 'Distribution of the Sensible' and the Politics of Literature.....	26
1.2.3. Beyond the Boundary – The Black Radical Tradition's Perception of Politics and Culture	33
Section Summary.....	41
1.3. Ways of Reading the Political Dimension of Glissant's Work – The Departmentalisation of the Politics of Relation.....	43
1.3.1. Glissant's Politics in Postcolonial Literature – The Construction of an 'Early' and 'Late Glissant'.....	45
1.3.2. Cementing Glissant's Political Legacy – Keeping Apart What Belongs Together.....	53
1.3.3. Interrupting a Western Monologue – Introducing Glissant to Political Theoretical Scholarship.....	59
Section Summary.....	63
1.4. Glissant's Philosophy of Relation – Method and Key Concepts	66
1.4.1. Poetics and Politics in Glissant's Philosophy of Relation – Mapping a Field of Force ..	66
1.4.2. Studying Glissant's Political Archive – Bringing Fiction, Life-Writing, Organisational Action and Abstract Political Thought into Relation	78
1.4.3. Giving Direction to Glissant's Politics of Relation – The Movement of Marronage as Conceptual Lens.....	89
Chapter 2: Fleeing into the Past to Imagine the Future – A Marronage Into Time	
2.0. Chapter Introduction.....	100
2.1. Historical Marronage and the Conceptualisation of an Elusive Kind of Flight.....	111
2.1.1. Colonial and Decolonial Historiography.....	111
2.1.2. Petit or Grand? The Pitfalls of the Plantocracy's Categories.....	116
2.1.3. Revolutionary or Restorative? African Political Ideas in Maroon Communities.....	121
Section Summary.....	125
2.2. (Re-)Making History – Glissant's 'Prophetic Vision of the Past'.....	126
2.2.1. Against History with a capital H – Le discours antillais and A New Set of Historical Points of Reference.....	126
2.2.2. Intuition and the Relational Imagination – Glissant's Philosophy of History	129
2.2.3. The Multiple Meanings of Marronage in Le discours antillais	141
Section Summary.....	146
2.3. Becoming Papa Longoué – Glissant's Performance of a Flight Into the Past.....	147
2.3.1. Historic Flight Across Time and Space – The Past as an Island	148
2.3.2. Performing the Prophet of Creolisation – Public Appearances of the Late Glissant....	155
Chapter Summary.....	164

Chapter 3: From the Plantation to the Tout-Monde – A Marronage into the World

3.0. Chapter Introduction.....	169
3.1. From Fictional Marronage to Fiction as Marronage – Worldly Movements in Le quatrième siècle and Ormerod.....	172
3.1.1. New Lands on the Horizon – The Movement From the Plantation to the Archipelago in Le quatrième siècle.....	173
3.1.2. The Sea is Not a Boundary – The Movement From the Archipelago to the World in Ormerod	178
3.1.3. The World as Point of Reference – Creating Worldly Relations Through Literary Techniques.....	182
3.2. Mycéa's Marronage – Disappearing Into the World Without Moving.....	188
3.2.1. No Need to Travel to See the World – Mycéa's Black Cosmopolitanism.....	190
3.2.2. Crossing the Border Between Life and Writing – Mycéa Steps Out of the Text.....	195
3.2.3. Re-Inscribed Political Action – Mycéa's Ecological Turn.....	197
3.2.4. Glissantian Globalised Political Action – The Case of the Manifeste pour un projet global.....	200
3.3. Leaving Traces in the Tout-Monde – Glissant's Personal Marronage Into the World	207
3.3.1. From the Island to the Archipelago – Towards the Institut martiniquais d'études.....	211
3.3.2. From the Archipelago to the Whole-World – Towards the Institut du Tout-Monde....	226
Chapter Summary.....	236

Chapter 4: From Individual Isolation to the Creation of World-Communities – A Marronage Towards Alternative Ways of Being Together

4.0. Chapter Introduction.....	241
4.1. Rethinking Forms of Togetherness – From the Nation-State Paradigm to Non-Sovereign Futures.....	247
4.1.1. From 'Blood and Soil' to the 'Impossible Community' – On Modern and Postmodern Community Conceptions.....	247
4.1.2. The Status Issue in the Caribbean and the Potential of 'Non-Sovereign Futures'.....	254
Section Summary.....	262
4.2. From Dream Countries to Real Countries – The Island and the Archipelago as Community Models.....	264
4.2.1. There Are No Maroons Without Slaves – Individuals and Communities in Glissant's Fictional Oeuvre.....	265
4.2.2. Stylistic Marronage – Creating Communities By Literary Means.....	278
Section Summary.....	291
4.3. From the Archipelago to the World Community	294
4.3.1. Invisible But Real – Glissant's Global Epic of the Batouto Community.....	297
4.3.2. 'The Batouto Are Among Us' – The Poet's Task of Identifying Batoutos.....	309
4.3.3. (Re)Producing World-Communities of Readers and Writers.....	313
Section Summary	322
4.4. 'Poetics in International Organisations!' – Creating World-Communities of Readers and Writers.....	326
4.4.1. Creating a World-Community of Readers – Glissant's Editorial Work at the UNESCO Courier (1982-1988).....	327
4.4.2. Creating a World-Community of Writers – The International Parliament of Writers (1993-2003).....	335
Section Summary.....	342
Chapter Summary	345

Chapter 5: Political Theoretical Implications of Moving Away – Marronage as an Abstract Political Movement

5.0. Introduction.....	349
5.1. Marronage and Related Concepts in Political Studies	353
5.1.1. Isabel Lorey's Exodus as Temporary Withdrawal.....	358
5.1.2. Neil Roberts' Theory of Liberation and the Goals of Glissant's Marronage.....	365
5.1.3. Fred Moten and Black Fugitivity.....	371
Section Summary	376
5.2. Glissant's Border Thought and Movements of Migration.....	377
5.2.1. From Walls to Points of Passage – Glissant's New Border Thought.....	379
5.2.2. 'The Walls Are in Our Head' – From the Problem of Migration to the Political Force of Migrations.....	390
Section Summary.....	397
5.3. New Borders for New Communities – Notes Towards an Applied Glissantian Border Thought.....	399
5.3.1. The Critical Strand of a Glissantian Approach to Border Regimes	402
5.3.2. A Creative Approach to a Glissantian Border Regime – The Future of Small Countries, Parallel Societies and the Archipelago of Cities.....	406
Section Summary.....	410
5.4. Glissant's Democratic Imaginary of Relation and the Project of Decolonising Democracy.....	412
5.4.1. From the Greek Polis Towards Creole Democratic Cultures – Glissant's Democratic Thought and Radical Democratic Theory.....	418
5.4.2. Glissant and African Debates On Democracy	424
5.4.3. The case of the Zapatistas – A Living Example of a Glissantian Marronage?.....	434
Section Summary.....	441
Chapter Summary.....	444

Chapter 6: Glissant's Politics of Relation in Perspective

6.0. Chapter Introduction.....	448
6.1. Conceptualising the Politics of Relation as a Postcolonial Political Practice.....	452
6.1.1. The Politics of Relation as Normative Concept	453
6.1.2. The Politics of Relation as Analytical Concept.....	454
6.1.3. The Politics of Relation as a Movement of Marronage.....	455
6.2. Across the Lines – The Versatile Nature of Glissant's Politics of Relation	457
6.2.1. Across the Lines of Visibility – From the Poem's Opacity to the Poet's Public Interventions	457
6.2.2. From Planetary to Local Time and Back – Adjusting the Modes of Struggle.....	460
6.2.3. A Lesson in Relational Politics – Manthia Diawara's 'Orchestrated' Encounter.....	464
6.3. The Forces and Enemies of the Living or the 'Hard Line' of the Politics of Relation	467
6.3.1. The Relational Binary at the Basis of Glissant's Non-Universal-Universalism.....	467
6.3.2. Distant Relatives – Glissant's Relativist-Universalism and Divisive Modes of Decolonial Struggle.....	476
6.4. Relating the Disciplines – Towards a Conversation Between Postcolonial Literary and Political Studies.....	484
6.4.1. Contribution to Glissant Scholarship	485
6.4.2. Contribution to Postcolonial Theory.....	486
6.4.3. Contribution to Literary Studies	489
6.4.4. Contribution to Political Studies.....	490
Bibliography.....	496

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the support this work has received as part of the Research Training Group Minor Cosmopolitanisms at the Department of English and American Studies of the University of Potsdam. The general set-up of the Research Training Group and the collegial spirit among its doctoral fellows and team of supervisors provided ideal circumstances for the pursuit and completion of this research project. I am particularly thankful to my supervisors Professor Nicole Waller and Professor Ina Kerner, whose trust, encouraging feedbacks and comments allowed me to pursue the interdisciplinary trajectory I set out to pursue with this project. I am also deeply grateful for the initial guidance and encouragement this work has received in its early stages at the African Studies Unit of the University of Cape Town from Professor Anthony Bogues and from Harry Garuba, whose wisdom, humour and kindness are sorely missed.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for publications by Édouard Glissant:

SLDC	Soleil de la conscience, 1955
LL	La Lézarde, 1958
LAGHD	Les Antilles et la Guyane à l'heure de la décolonisation, 1961
MT	Monsieur Toussaint, 1961
LQS	Le quatrième siècle, 1964
IP	L'Intention poétique, 1969
MM	Malemort, 1975
LCDC	La Case du commandeur, 1981
LDA	Le Discours antillais, 1981
MAH	Mahagony, 1987
PR	Poétique de la Relation, 1990
TM	Tout-Monde, 1993
TTM	Traité du Tout-Monde, 1997
PC	Poèmes complets, 1994
IPD	Introduction à une poétique du Divers, 1996
FM	Faulkner, Mississippi, 1996
SAT	Sartorius, 1999
LMI	Le Monde incréée, 2000
OD	Ormerod, 2003
LCDL	La cohée du Lamentin, 2005
UNRDM	Une nouvelle région du monde, 2006
ME	Mémoires des esclavages, 2007
EBR	Les entretiens de Baton Rouge, 2008
PHR	Philosophie de la Relation, 2009
ATM	La Terre, le feu, l'eau et les vents – Une Anthologie de la poésie du Tout-monde, 2010
QLMT	Quand les Murs tombent – L'identité nationale hors-la-loi?, 2007
LIBM	L'intraitable beauté du monde – Adresse à Barack Obama, 2009
MPHN	Manifeste pour les 'produits' de haute nécessité, 2009

Note on Languages and Translations

Given the fact that most of Glissant's work has not been translated into English, the main considerations behind the adopted quotation practice in this thesis reflects a compromise between prioritising readability for an Anglophone readership, while also maintaining the importance of engaging with the nuances of the French original text. In cases where an established English translation of Glissant's texts was available, I therefore quote from the existing translation without recourse to the French original. This mainly concerns the books *Poetics of Relation*, *Caribbean Discourse*, *Faulkner Mississippi*, *Monsieur Toussaint* and *The Overseers Cabin* as well as several shorter essays published online. In cases where I consider it important to point out differences between the English translations and the French original – an aspect that particularly concerns Michael J. Dash's translation of selected essays taken from *Le discours antillais* in *Caribbean Discourse* –, I explicitly highlight the implications of specific translation choices. To avoid confusion and to not over-emphasise the differences between original and translation, I refer to Glissant's publications with their French original title in the general body of the text. In cases where an English translation of Glissant's work was not available, I quote directly from the French original and provide my own translation in a footnote, or in brackets directly following the original in the case of shorter phrases. Where I quote other authors writing in French or German I provide my own translation in the body of the text and add the original version in the footnote. This excludes cases where an English translation was available.

List of Illustrations

Illustration 1: Conceptual configuration around Glissant's imaginary of Relation.

Illustration 2: Glissant in front of the Anse Caffard Cap 110 monument in Le Diamant, caption from the film *One World in Relation* by Manthia Diawara.

Illustration 3: Arrangement of images in François Noudelmann's book *Édouard Glissant – L'identité généreuse*.

Illustration 4: Glissant's 'Map of the Diaspora' at the end of *Le discours antillais*.

Illustration 5: Map of a selection of Batouto people and places in Glissant's novels.

Illustration 6: Cover the *UNESCO Courier* issue *Small Countries – A Wealth of Cultures*.

Illustration 7: Glissant's drawing *L'archipel est un passage, et non pas un mur*.

Illustration 8: Map depicting the main movements of Glissant's intellectual marronage.

In Memory of Harry Garuba

Preface

In 2011, I met Ntone Edjabe, the founding editor of the Pan-African literary magazine *Chimurenga* for an interview on the balcony of the Pan-African Market in Cape Town's Long Street, where the magazine's editorial offices were located at the time. I had been a fan of *Chimurenga* since I had found one of their small *Chimurenganyana* booklets titled *Variations on the Beautiful in the Congolese World of Sounds* written by Achille Mbembe (2009) two years earlier. I then tried to read all of the magazine's previous editions and was amazed as much by its content – crossing the boundaries of literary genres and combining everything of interest to me in the worlds of politics, music, literature – as by the magazine's changing formats and beautiful layout. What struck me the most was that it did not try to make an effort to be understood. The people and books that were referenced appeared to be self-evidently important. If I did not know them, it was up to me to find out, an editorial approach captured by the magazine's subtitle *who no know go know*. Our meeting took place months before the launch of the first issue of the *Chimurenga Chronic*, which was announced as a time-machine in the form of an imaginary newspaper that travelled back into the year 2008 to report about the outbreak of large-scale xenophobic violence across South Africa anew. When I told Edjabe about how I appreciated that the magazine allowed me to explore, at my own pace, a world that no one had told me about, Edjabe referred to a Caribbean writer whose name he could not recall at the time, but who had written about the 'right to opacity', a notion he opposed to the paradigm of transparency. I was intrigued by the fact that the writer's name had slipped Edjabe's mind, but even more so by the idea that his work was somehow of importance for the way *Chimurenga* understood itself. That is how I found Glissant.

The first couple of pages I read from Glissant were an extract from *Poetics of Relation*, Betsy Wing's 1997 translation of *Poétique de la Relation* (1990). With the kind of expectations I had, and with such a book title, it was difficult not to be disappointed. At first sight, the main themes I encountered were the concerns with identity, culture and history that were typical for much of postcolonial literature. At the time a young generation of South African students had grown impatient with the 'culture talk' of postcolonial literature and called for a return to the anticolonial writings of Frantz Fanon. The reasoning behind this was that South Africa still had to be decolonised before one could even begin speaking about postcolonialism – a belief that eventually led to the Rhodes Must Fall uprisings in 2015. Whereas Fanon had written the *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) in the midst of the Algerian war of liberation against France and died of leukaemia at age 36, Glissant had lived up to the age of 82 and had increasingly addressed more 'cosmopolitan concerns' once the struggle for independence of his native island, Martinique, turned out to not

stand a realistic chance of success. Still, to me there was something in Glissant's style of writing, something about the tension between the poetics and politics of relation, between writing and organisational action, that I wanted to know more about. And towards the end of a brief chapter called *For Opacity*, where Glissant describes his understanding of opacity in his typically elusive manner as “The opaque is not the obscure, though it is possible for it to be so and be accepted as such. It is that which cannot be reduced, which is the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence” (PR 191), it clicked, and I found the question and answer complex I wanted to interrogate in my PhD thesis:

“How can one reconcile the hard line inherent in any politics and the questioning essential to any relation? Only by understanding that it is impossible to reduce anyone, no matter who, to a truth he would not have generated on his own. That is, within the opacity of his time and place. Plato's city is for Plato, Hegel's vision is for Hegel, the griot's town is for the griot. Nothing prohibits our seeing them in confluence, without confusing them in some magma or reducing them to each other. This same opacity is also the force that drives every community: the thing that would bring us together forever and make us permanently distinctive. Widespread consent to specific opacities is the most straightforward equivalent of nonbarbarism. We clamour the right to opacity for everyone” (PR 194).

The certainty of Glissant's response to the age old philosophic debate between universalism and relativism was as puzzling as what he *actually* meant by the right to opacity. In *Poétique de la Relation* he did not get any more specific. So I read on.

*

One of the earliest pieces of advice I received when I turned my interest to Glissant into a research project, was to read Glissant's work as a whole¹ if I wanted to convincingly make the case that he was a political writer. I naively followed this advice and began reading his books without any systematic order, but according to whatever version I could find. What complicated and slowed-down the reading process was what I perceived to be my less than proficient knowledge of French and the unavailability of most of Glissant's work in translation. I often had to stop, take a break, and continue elsewhere, because I could not make sense of what I had read. In these moments it was consoling to find out that even the most established Glissant scholars ran into similar difficulties. His claim for a right to opacity and deliberate address to a 'future readership' meant that most of his writing is “at the very edge of what is readable”, in Mary Gallagher's words (2008b, 94). The three Martinican novelists Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant, who refer to Glissant as the founding figure of a new generation of creole literature in their manifesto *In Praise of Creoleness*, also admitted that they “received his texts like hieroglyphs in which we were able somehow to perceive the quivering of a voice, the oxygen of a perspective” (1990, 890). I figured

1 Twenty-one essay books, eight novels, two theatre plays and the collection of his works of poetry.

the obstacles to 'understanding' Glissant's literary work thus cannot be reduced to fluency in French, its creolised version, or familiarity with the context from which it emerged.² If one were to stand any chance of 'understanding' Glissant, I was learning, one would have to read Glissant in between the lines or 'beyond the words', an expression evoked by the Martinican poet Monchoachi in the creole expression “*déyé do pawol*”.³

The difficulties associated with reading Glissant also translated into a difficulty of writing about his work. As part of what René Ménéil refers to as his 'remarkably singular language' (2011, 32), Glissant's style of writing has also been interpreted as performing a contestation of university discourse. Alexandre Leupin has made the argument that on an epistemological level, Glissant's work disrupts some of the main conceptual oppositions that underlay the formation of the modern academic disciplines, such as the separations of form and content, theory and practice, body and mind (2016, 19). While some disciplines in the humanities have become more accommodating to artistic practices and poeticism than others, problems still arise when one has to describe or theorise what Glissant meant by his philosophical concepts. In that regard it seems as though the seemingly paradoxical definitions of, for instance, the Tout-Monde as a 'non-totalitarian totality', a sense of history as a 'prophetic vision of the past', a conception of knowledge based on the belief that 'nothing is true, everything is alive', or Relation as the 'consciousness of all the differences of the world without leaving out a single one' have been deliberately formulated in such a way that their meanings cannot be fixed, that they cannot be defined. It is telling that Glissant liked to compare his style of writing to the tradition of free Jazz (Denis and Glissant 2009). His name, which translates as 'slippery', is programmatic in this sense. Writing an academic thesis about a work that resists being explained thus risks turning into a paradoxical endeavour.

A question that has accompanied my PhD project on Glissant's politics thus became how I ought to write it. Not necessarily whether it would be as opaque or poetic as Glissant's writing, but whether I would manage to, formally, not contradict the very point I was trying to make. If my thesis was going to be that his political practice had something valuable to contribute to contemporary decolonial struggles, and if the way in which he articulated his practice mattered as much as its contents, this meant that the manner in which I conveyed this practice would have to somehow reflect the importance of this aspect of his work. In that regard, I realised that I would not be able to proceed in a straight line from problem statement to solution, from one theory to another, or in a classical analytical fashion. Instead, I felt that my best option was to first sketch the entire

2 Critics like Chris Bongie have attributed his elusiveness to the aristocratic trait of a resolutely 'high-brow writer' (2008, 342) whose political efficacy is as questionable as the virtue of a “therapist who cannot communicate with his patients” (141).

3 This phrase was mentioned in a talk given by Jacques Coursil at a conference dedicated to Glissant's *Le discours antillais* called *La Source et le Delta* (Fort-de-France, November 5-6, 2019).

landscape of the political dimension of his oeuvre – the political to be understood here in the broadest sense possible –, to eventually get a sense of its overall shape or direction.

*

While I was grappling with these questions, I began working for *Chimurenga* on an issue called *New Cartographies*. The collaborative mode of working in the editorial team differed radically from the academic culture I had become accustomed to. For every piece of writing that would be included in the *Chronic*, which had turned into a quarterly publication at this point, questions pertaining to the appropriate language and form had to be addressed. For some of its readers and contributors, *Chimurenga* is a kind of home, a global spiritual or intellectual community outside and across geographically and institutionally determined spaces, as well as an actual community of friends, a physical space that functions as a sanctuary from Cape Town's coloniality. For me it also became a school where I learned another way of reading and writing with others, a mode of research “reliant on anecdotal knowledge passed through intimate connections, rather than through sanctioned cultural spheres” (Smit 2017). In theoretical terms, this kind of practice has been described by Fred Moten as black study, where blackness is distinct from 'black people' and denotes a way of being in the world along with a transdisciplinary and collective mode of learning and teaching, informed by lived experiences, encounters, improvisations and political solidarity outside established educational institutions.⁴ In the process of putting together the actual maps that formed part of the *New Cartographies* issue, researchers and visual artists worked together on mapping 'data' that was taken from academic papers and books, newspaper articles, novels and existing knowledge in the group. Out of this collective practice would later grow my own interest in mapmaking as a method that combines science and art in a way that I instinctively consider to be a political practice in its vocation to make visible a particular vision of the world.

Initially the very existence of *Chimurenga*, and later the editorial debates around the *Chronic*, inspired and encouraged me to experiment with different forms my work on Glissant could take. The first among them was an essay titled *Fragments of Glissant*, which was made up of an anachronistic collection of anecdotes, mixing biographical episodes with his philosophic ideas. There was no coherent idea behind the text other than my interest in the political dimension of Glissant's work – which the secondary literature had relegated as being only of secondary importance. After I had read most of his essay books, I simply took from them what I felt was most important, without attempting to theorise the political practice that I saw running across these short

4 In an interview with Stacy Hardy titled *The Alternative is at Hand* Fred Moten and Stefano Harney define Black Study in the following way: “Black study is the irreducibly social mode of concern that blackness enacts in its constant, preservative differentiation of and from itself. [...] We think of it as a coenobitically monastic kind of thing – a Thelonial, rather than Benedictine, monkishness. The laws it makes are against rule, against the rules. It happens in churches but also in clubs; it happens in cells and in the holds of ships. It persists, under duress, as criticism and celebration” (Hardy 2013, 18).

glimpses into his work. The hope was that the main gist would be deciphered by the reader.

As part of a *Chronic* special issue on 'science fiction' my next experiment was a comic I produced together with Graeme Arendse, *Chimurenga's* graphic designer. The three-page graphic story *Salut Glissant* shows an encounter between Glissant and his friend Patrick Chamoiseau, after Glissant had passed away in 2011 (Arendse and März 2016).⁵ Again, as in *Fragments of Glissant*, the comic works without an actual narrative. Chamoiseau comes to visit Glissant, who is waiting for him on his own grave. The two then go for a walk along the black beach of Le Diamant and end up taking a boat to Diamond Rock. During their walk, the two friends chat about the meanings of Glissant's concepts, the weather and the lagging recognition of his work in Martinique. When Glissant laments, "You know what I like to say, they will never understand me", Chamoiseau responds "They could at least name a street after you, like they did for Fanon." Playing with the notion of his right to opacity, and with the African tradition of conversing with the ancestors, both characters are depicted as shadows after the first panel. Even more so than in the essay, *Salut Glissant* is an actual performance of the kind of literature Glissant himself produced. For a moment I felt like I had found the perfect form. As a specific genre of fragmented writing, comics – in contrast to conventional prose – disrupt the continuous flow of reading, opposing the partial, incomplete and contradictory to the 'infinite, continuous and homogeneous space' Benedict Anderson has associated with the novel's historical and formal complicity with the political form of the nation-state (2006). By exercising 'weak reader control', thus doing the opposite of 'taking the reader by the hand', these 'gappy' texts do not hide their constructed nature behind a facade of organic wholeness.⁶ Most of Glissant's work could be seen as belonging to this style of writing. In novels like *Tout-Monde* (1993) and *Sartorius* (1997) in particular, there is no guiding narrative that ties the seemingly unrelated episodes of peoples in dispersed times and places across the world together – other than the fact that they are all included in the same book and that the reader has to decode this 'intelligible arrangement of the images' (Eisner 2008, 51). For the most part, what Glissant seemed to be doing in these books appeared to me like the sketch of an alternative vision of the world, or the contours of an imaginary community sharing this world-view. If a map mainly consists of creating relations, it is not surprising that the self-proclaimed philosopher of relation should revert to mapping as a method. With this in mind, I drew a map that was mainly based on Glissant's novels *Sartorius*, *Ormerod* and *Tout-Monde* and called it *Le Tout-Monde* (Illustration 5). The map shows individuals and collectives, like Georg Büchner, Anton Wilhelm Amo, the Herero people, Bob Marley and the fictional character of Mycéa, who, according to Glissant, all belong to

5 Valerie Loichot's article *Édouard Glissant's Graves* (2013) was an important inspiration for the comic.

6 I thank Dirk Wiemann for pointing out to this aspect of the politics of form to me.

the invisible nation of the Batouto, spiritual descendants of an imaginary African nation sharing a particular vocation of *seeing the invisible*. The map shows their location and movements as well as their invisible connection as belonging to one community. What gets lost is, of course, the poetic way in which their stories are told. Mapping is, after all, to a large degree, a process of reduction. It could thus be considered as violating Glissant's right to opacity as 'that which cannot be reduced'. And why map the Batouto? Why make them visible? And why, in the same vein, make Glissant's political practice visible? In *Le discours antillais*, Glissant still equated the protective presence of the forest that accommodated the maroon communities that had fled from the slave plantations to the kind of stylistic marronage and opaque writing practices performed by the intellectuals of his generation.⁷ What had changed for him in the half a century that had passed since the decolonial struggles of the 1960s was that “*aujourd'hui les Batoutos se laissent deviner par nous, parce qu'il n'est plus un lieu du monde qui soit invisible absolument, et que seuls nos aveuglements sans voyance nous empêchent de le concevoir*”⁸ (OD 301). Above all, the Batouto are made visible in Glissant's fictional work because they are the world-community, the 'people that is missing', as stated in the epigraph to *Sartorius*. Analogously, I based my thesis on the assumption that Glissant's politics of relation might, in a way, be what is missing today.

*

But a PhD thesis asks for more. Academics might enjoy writing about maps, comics and fiction but da map, a comic or a piece of fiction hardly passes as a thesis. From this perspective, the question can be posed whether what I was doing in my formal experiments were merely reproductions or representations of what Glissant had said or written. In that case, I might just as well leave @GlissantBot to do the talking, a twitter channel that automatically churns out quotes taken from Glissant's work every 15 minutes – the celebration or ridicule of the 'gappiness' of Glissant's work taken to the extreme (The Otolith Group 2017). For a while, this option did not seem altogether unattractive to me. After all, the approach to knowledge Glissant proposed in *For Opacity* suggests a more intimate relationship between the object and subject of study, if not the disappearance of this separation. In contrast to the verb *comprendre*, which includes the verb 'to take', with “the movement of hands that grab their surroundings and bring them back to themselves. A gesture of enclosure if not appropriation”, he suggested the gesture of “giving-on-and-with that opens finally on totality” (PR 191-92). The risk associated with the gesture of 'passing on', relaying

7 “The forest is the last vestige of myth in its present literary manifestation. In its impenetrable nature history feeds our desire. The forest of the maroon was thus the first obstacle the slave opposed to the transparency of the planter. No way forward in the trees” (CD 82-83).

8 “Today the Batouto allow us to see them, because there is no longer any place that is absolutely invisible, and only our visionless blindnesses prevents us from perceiving them”, my translation.

and remaining uncertain, is that of unreadability. Unreadability here in the sense of not actually understanding the text or remaining unmoved by it, as Alexander Garcia Düttmann mentions in his reflections on the experience of translating Jacques Derrida's work into German. According to Düttmann, a certain degree of suffering due to the unreadability of a text is part of the fun: “because the untranslatable is what forces the translation onto the translator”⁹ (2019, 137). As long as the translator wants to remain a translator, he or she has to believe in the possibility of unravelling, of detangling the text in the belief that what moves him can also move the reader of the translation.

Although I had, at some point, become disillusioned with the prospect of finding an adequate language to write about Glissant academically, I kept producing draft chapters in the hope that, at some point, things would fall into place. Because of what I felt was a disjuncture between my academic work and the editorial work I had kept these two spheres relatively separate from one another. The one was a means to an end, the other an end itself. But after several years of reading Glissant, the initial advice of reading Glissant as a whole slowly kept making more sense. The landscape I had been sketching was beginning to expand and branch out in more telling ways. Eventually it became possible to discern its actual shape and the direction Glissant's political work was taking. What I at first conceived as several different political strategies, Glissant had employed throughout his life, could actually be joined together. What I had missed or simply did not understand because of my distance from Glissant, or my lack of literary training, I could make up by getting an overview of everything he had written that somehow related to the political, without relying on the categories employed by others. This perspective allowed me to discern a general direction in his political work that would have perhaps remained invisible from a study of a selection of his writings, or of his activist engagements alone. The direction I started to discern was a kind of flight into the world, an intellectual movement of marronage.¹⁰

*

To gather up the courage to actually write the map that would be my thesis, I still had to come to the realisation that, instead of discovering and reflecting a political practice that was somehow hidden in Glissant's work, I had to actively create it through my interpretation. And it was during a conversation at the University of Potsdam with Lucy Gasser that I realised that I, unconsciously, had been working with mapping as a method all along. In the course of the preceding years, I had developed a fairly consistent cartographic method that developed into a series of maps included in the 2018 issue of the *Chronic* called *The African Imagination of a Borderless World*. Inspired in part by Glissant's 'map of the Diaspora' at the end of *Le discours*

9 “weil allein das Unübersetzbare ihm die Übersetzung aufdrängt”⁹, my translation.

10 In historical terms, marronage was the act of flight from slaves from the plantation and the practice of creating new communities at a distance from colonial society. For an elaborate conceptualisation of the term see 1.4.3.

antillais (1981), we explored how the movements of intellectuals, musicians and writers performed what we called the 'non-universal universalism' of Pan-Africanism and, in passing, responded to the debate on borders and migration from the perspective of a relational ontology enshrined by the *Charte du Mandingue* (1222).

The process of creating these maps is relatively straight-forward: I start by reading the material I want to map. This might range from a short article, a chapter of a book, to someone's complete work. While rereading my notes and highlighted passages in the texts, I make a first set of sketches on blank A4 sheets of paper. I do not have to worry about this confinement because I can add as many additional pages to it as I need by gluing them together. With most maps, the first round of sketches cover about ten to twelve pages. In the next step, I spread the pages out in front of me on the floor, since tables tend to be too small. In a second take, I emphasise the main lines or shapes by retracing the initial drawings. Usually then, if not at a later point in time, I can make out the general shape or direction the map is taking. Is it an evolution? A dislocation? A spiral? A back-and-forth movement? A divergence or merging together? Once the main image is clear, I try to reduce the information to the essential points, to such a degree that the map becomes legible, which usually requires a reduction of 50 or 75 per cent of the content. To give emphasis to certain aspects that are particularly important, I use a coloured pen to draw over the pencil sketches. This forms an added layer to the overall shape of the map. Another layer might consist of quotes taken from the research material or images that do not necessarily serve to illustrate the map, but make points that I would not be able to make in writing or drawing. Most of these steps are done by hand. But thanks to the computer I can do final touches digitally, rotate something, scale it down etc. In the case of my thesis, I had not done any drawings but I had digitally filled hundreds of pages with words. The degree of their congruence or density varied significantly. What had remained fuzzy in the drafts were aspects that I did not deem to be of great importance, so I chose not go into great detail with them until I could discern the general contours of the actual 'map'.

What I particularly appreciate about maps is that they can be read in different ways, that they offer different points of entry and tend to be generous in their sharing of information. Whereas the text works from the top to the bottom of a page, guiding the reader in a straight line, the map operates more horizontally and allows for more erratic readings. The kind of maps I am interested in are also by nature subjective and do not claim to be the only way one can represent a particular story. They do not try to be complete in the sense of covering everything either – like the solid block of a full page –, but are content with leaving some white spaces or question marks that allude to everything that remains unknown. In that sense, it is not surprising that the map has been of particular interest for postmodern writers. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari – who by the way were

close friends of Glissant – for example wrote in the foreword to in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

“The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation. Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways; in this sense, the burrow is an animal rhizome, and sometimes maintains a clear distinction between the line of flight as passageway and storage or living strata. A map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back 'to the same.' The map has to do with performance, whereas the tracing always involves an alleged 'competence'” (1987, 12-13).

If I had to explore the theoretical implications of mapping as a method further, I would say that what drew me to maps was not necessarily a critique of cartographic reasoning (Olsson 2007) or the intricate entanglements of the colonial project with mapping the land, the bodies and subjects it sought to control (Garuba 2002, 87-96). My interest in maps thus differs slightly from the 'radical cartography' of Philippe Rekacewicz, who has demonstrated how “there is no such thing as an innocent map” and that “what we map is mainly ideologies” (2013). Although I am aware of the manipulation that takes place in the subjective process of filtering data, my interest in maps did not arise out of a desire in counter-mapping the universality of the Mercator map, in which the North disproportionately dominates the globe. In the context of my work on Glissant, this kind of (mis)representation could be equated to problems of the 'maps' produced in the secondary literature about Glissant's political practice as lacking in revolutionary fervour, where the golden standard of political writing remains Fanon, whose engagement for the liberation of Algeria remains the perfect embodiment of Sartre's committed intellectual (1.3.2.). Yet, especially following on from the editorial conversations we had as part of the issue on the *African Imagination of a Borderless World* (2018), an inspiring came from Achille Mbembe's argument about the African political archive's potential to offer an alternative imagination to the dominant Euroliberal paradigm and its reliance on the notion of impermeable borders and categorical separations. In terms of mapping, Mbembe's arguments can be extended towards a crucial difference between the Western cartographic tradition and what he generally calls the African model. In the case of the latter:

“places were not described by points or lines. What mattered the most was the distribution of movement between places. Movement was the driving force of the production of space and movement itself [...] What mattered the most was the extent to which flows and their intensities intersected and interacted with other flows, the new forms they could take when they intensified. So movement, especially among the Dogon, could lead to diversions, conversions and intersections. These were more important than points, lines and surfaces – which are as we know cardinal references in Western geometrics” (2018).

At a basic level, apart from the aesthetic privileging of certain symbols over others, which

Mbembe evokes here, I took this to mean the need to emphasise relations over separations in my maps, of showing what connects A to B, instead of strictly keeping A and B apart. While I am aware that, as *Chimurenga's* Stacy Hardy cautions in *A Brief History of Mapping* “One never maps a territory that one doesn't contemplate appropriating” (2015, 3), I hope that my appropriation of Glissant's politics of relation is more of a gesture of giving-on-and-with and less a process of grasping, “not a map in which to locate or recognize oneself in a predetermined plane with fixed coordinates [but one] where things may go off in unforeseen directions or work in unregulated ways, a map meant for those who want to do something with respect to new uncommon forces, which we don't quite yet grasp” (Rajchman 2007, 141).

I would like to end these reflections on mapmaking as method with a more conventional sense of maps, and with the transformative power of literature. In December 2019 I had the opportunity of visiting Glissant's native island Martinique for the first time. On the fifth day of our stay we took the *taxi collectif* from Fort-de-France to the sea side town of Le Diamant, which turned out to be a lot more touristic than in my imagination. We paid a brief visit to Glissant's grave, and spend the afternoon swimming in the ocean and sitting on the black beach facing the Diamant Rock which majestically rose hundreds of meters out of the water on the horizon. On our way back to Fort-de-France we drove past the *Nègre marron* monument, of which I had included an image in the *Salut Glissant* comic, but which I had mysteriously not been able to find during our walk through Le Diamant. Looking for it on Google Maps back at the apartment I saw that the street running up into the hills from the roundabout on which the maroon monument was standing had just recently been renamed into Rue Édouard Glissant. Although I was under no illusion that concrete political proposals had to be articulated and defended to effect the renaming of the street, I liked the idea that my comic might have humbly contributed to the name change through what Aimé Césaire called the *armes miraculeuses*. In the interpretation of the Guadeloupean novelist Maryse Condé, these 'miraculous weapons' are nothing but words: “Those words that so often we pronounce without paying attention to them [...] have the power to create and destroy, to give birth and to transform. They can bring about a new world, built on the ruins of the injustice and corruption of the old one. Their power is at the same time poetical and political” (1995, 18). Whether the imagined dialogue in *Salut Glissant* played a role in the change of the street name or not, I was above grateful and delighted that Glissant's name was now visible in the landscape of Martinique. I could not have asked for a more poetic confirmation that I was headed in the right direction.

Chapter 1:
The Poet's Politics

Reading Glissant's Political Legacy
as a Movement of Marronage

1.0. Chapter Introduction

Summary presentations of the life and work of Édouard Glissant tend to appear in variations of the following narrative: Glissant was a poet, novelist and essayist, and the winner of the Renaudot literary prize in 1958 for his first novel *La Lézarde*. He was born in 1928 on the island of Martinique, in the town of Saint-Marie. Martinique was a French colony at the time and turned into a French Overseas Department in 1946, an official status that effectively maintained the island's politico-economic neocolonial dependency on mainland France. Glissant entered the Lycée Schoelcher in Fort-de-France on a scholarship in 1938. At the Lycée, Aimé Césaire was teaching philosophy and Frantz Fanon was his senior by two years. Together with a group of friends, Glissant began publishing his poems and essays in a self-founded cultural journal called *Franc Jeu*. He left for France in 1946 to study philosophy at the Sorbonne university in Paris. In Paris he frequented both French literary and militant Afro-Caribbean circles engaged in the struggle for the independence of their countries. In 1961 he was the co-founder of the *Front des Antillais et Guyanais pour l'Autonomie* (FAGA), an anticolonial movement that was quickly banned by the French authorities. After the ban was lifted, Glissant returned to Martinique in 1965 and established the *Institut martiniquais d'études* (IME) two years later. The IME was an educational and cultural organisation dedicated to countering the alienation that resulted from the French colonial policy of assimilation. At the IME Glissant founded the literary magazine *ACOMA* in 1971. From 1981 to 1988 he was the director of the *UNESCO Courier* and from 1988 to 1994 he was professor for French Studies at the University of Louisiana. As the president of the *International Parliament of Writers*, he participated at the creation of a network of cities that offer refuge to writers who are persecuted in their home-countries. In 1994 he joined the City University New York to teach French literature. His international audience grew particularly following the publications and translations of *Le discours antillais* in 1981 and *Poétique de la Relation* in 1990. In 2006 he created the *Institut du Tout-Monde* in Paris. His last major essay *Philosophie de la Relation* was published in 2009. Glissant died in Paris in 2011.¹¹

Rehearsing this account in the staccato form of an abbreviated CV at the onset of this study is, of course, not meant as a satisfactory introduction as to *who Glissant was*. Instead, it is intended to alert the reader about the constructed nature of any life-writing account. The criteria according to which some of the events of Glissant's life are included in this narrative, and others excluded, as well as the concepts used to refer to certain of his activities are easily perceived as self-evident.

11 This account is loosely modelled on a translation of the introduction to Glissant's poems in *Cent ans de poésie en Martinique* by Gérard Lamoureux (2019, 81). Parts of it can also be found in Jean-Louis Joubert's *Édouard Glissant* (2005, 77-80), and the sections devoted to Glissant's biography in Michael J. Dash's *Édouard Glissant* (1995) and Samia Kassab-Charfi's *Et l'une et l'autre face des choses: La déconstruction poétique de l'Histoire dans Les Indes et Le Sel noir d'Édouard Glissant* (2011).

Underneath this list of moments, publications and achievements lies an incredibly complex life that has given rise to an enormously vast literary and political archive whose closer interrogation necessarily troubles neat chronologies and hierarchies. More importantly, once the enumeration of these basic 'life facts' has been established, the whole dynamic between Glissant's life and work, the relationship between his literary and political practice remains to be unravelled.¹² This conventional account of Glissant's biography does, nevertheless, point to several aspects at the heart of this study.

The first aspect refers to the fact that, the textual and non-textual dimensions of Glissant's work are usually seen as closely entangled with one another, and as being of similar importance. The prominent role of publishing initiatives, organisational engagements or the creation of institutions alongside references to his most well-known monographs in the brief account above are in line with this view. The relevance accorded to these activities can more generally be considered as emphasising the close connection of literary and political activities in Glissant's work. Measured against the standard of politically 'committed literature',¹³ the presentation of Glissant's extra-textual commitments could also be read as establishing his 'struggle credentials', so that his literary and poetic work cannot be rejected as apolitical or irrelevant. As debates in the literature sections of newspapers and in literary studies both attest, something fundamental tends to be at stake when an author is discredited as being, or as having been 'on the wrong side of history' in the sense of adhering to opinions or practices that are perceived as non-progressive or out-dated. From this viewpoint 'good literature' is oftentimes read as being equivalent with 'good politics'.

A second aspect supporting this line of introduction points to an apparent discrepancy between Glissant's self-perception and the image of him produced by others, a discrepancy that mainly revolves around the notion and importance of his poetry. In contrast to the prominent role accorded to his political activism in the above listed chronology, Glissant considered himself to be, first and foremost, a poet. In his last published work, a collection of poetry titled *La Terre, le feu, l'eau et les vents – Une anthologie de la poésie du Tout-Monde* (2010), Glissant described himself in this vein as “*Poète en premier lieu*” (a poet in the first place) (ATM 321). This self-designation can not only be understood as referring to the fact that, in chronological terms, Glissant first emerged on the Francophone literary scene in the early 1950s as a poet. Towards the end of his life, the international recognition he had received as “undoubtedly one of the most important theorists of the French colonial experience as well as one of the greatest writers of the Caribbean” (Britton 1999, 5), was however, more closely associated with his book-length essays than with his novels, and to an even lesser extent with his poetry. Apart from this interpretation based on considerations

12 I am paraphrasing Glissant's own statement about the need to revise the official history of Martinique in *Le discours antillais*: “Once this chronological table has been set up and completed, the whole history of Martinique remains to be unraveled. The whole Caribbean history of Martinique remains to be discovered” (CD 13) (see also 2.2.).

13 This term and related conceptions pertaining to the politics of literature will be discussed in 1.2.

of chronology and genre, the phrase “*Poète en premier lieu*” and the following main-clause, “*Édouard Glissant fonde sa poésie dans une pensée philosophique qui envisage le monde comme un changement sans déperdition, une nature en errance sans errement, un langage né de toutes les langues*”¹⁴ (ATM 321), also imply a privileging of the poetic over the philosophical sphere. The self-description continues with a marked emphasis on the concepts and literary works Glissant produced, and does not mention any of his extra-textual activities:

“*Il a développé les notions de créolisation, de Tout-monde, de Relation (Poétique de la Relation, Le Discours antillais, Traité du Tout-monde, Philosophie de la Relation). Ses romans descendent les espaces et les temps antillais (La Lézarde, Le Quatrième Siècle, Malemort, Tout-Monde, Sartorius) chaotiques et secrètement consentis. Monsieur Toussaint montre la vie et la mort inextricables chez le héros haïtien Toussaint Louverture*”¹⁵ (321).

In the context of this thesis, this brief bio written by Glissant gains in significance when it is read as emphasising what he considered himself *not to be*: Glissant considered himself neither a political activist, nor a political writer – at least not in the conventional senses of these terms. Glissant did, however, attribute a specific role to the poet. This is, for example, apparent in his speech *Le romancier noir et son peuple* (1957), in which Glissant contrasted the novel to the poem with regards to their respective potentials to contribute to the decolonial struggle. Calling for the black novel (*roman nègre*) to turn into a synthesis of 'an accusatory act' and the creation of a genuine style expressing an alternative cultural point of reference (29), Glissant argued that the poem is superior to the novel in the sense that it is, in itself, a cry that establishes its own form, “*une force prophétique, proprement un cri: il ne sépare pas de son objet, quand il accuse ou prévoit*”¹⁶ (30). To this literary analysis of the poem's formal qualities, Glissant added the observation that the 'dawns of all people' were announced through poetry and cites the works of Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Jacques Rabemananjara as examples, “*poètes, qui ont poussé le cri, politiques qui préparent l'avenir*”¹⁷ (30). These three poets and leading figures of the Négritude movement all eventually occupied political offices in their respective countries. Glissant's insistence on the political power of poetry therefore combines an abstract argument about the politics of a literary form with an observation about the nature of anticolonial struggles led by black poets of his time. Félix Guattari, a close friend of Glissant, remarked in this regard: “*Revolutionary movements can act through terrorism, through propaganda, discursively or through*

14 “The poetry of Édouard Glissant is based on a philosophy that envisions the world as change without loss, as a wondering nature that does not err, a language born out of all languages”, my translation.

15 “He developed the notions of creolisation, Tout-monde and Relation (*Poétique de la Relation, Le Discours antillais, Traité du Tout-monde, Philosophie de la Relation*). His novels descend into the Antillean times and spaces (*La Lézarde, Le Quatrième Siècle, Malemort, Tout-Monde, Sartorius*) in chaotic fashion and in secret consent. *Monsieur Toussaint* depicts the inextricable life and death of the Haitian hero Toussaint Louverture”, my translation.

16 “a prophetic force that does not separate itself from its object when it accuses or foresees”, my translation.

17 “poets who have pushed the political cry that sets the stage for the future”, my translation.

mass mobilisations. In his case it is as if he acted through poetry”¹⁸ (Collage 1987).

When Glissant called himself a poet 'first and foremost', this specific tradition of poetic creation, and his conviction of poetry's inherent political force, have to be taken into consideration for a study whose guiding interest of this study emerges from the curiosity to learn more about the tension that is created between the notions of poetics and politics. The disjuncture between the two perspectives on Glissant's work, which I outlined above, might imply that these terms repel one another. The external perspective emphasises the importance of placing Glissant's literary work in the context of his political activities, whereas Glissant's own perspective defends a relative autonomy of the poetic sphere. Instead of remaining at the level of this kind of opposition, my engagement with Glissant work has led me towards an exploration of different perceptions of 'the political' and 'the poetic' underlying his work. Working from the hypothesis that the 'politics of relation' forms an essential part of his overall philosophical project, and is a dimension that has yet to be described in this manner, this study is conceptualised as the first in-depth political reading of his work, a work that spanned six decades, emerging against the background of the anticolonial struggles of the 1950s and drawing to a close with the first decade of the 21st century.

In line with the interest outlined in these preliminary observations, an interest revolving around the productive tension between the notions of politics and poetics in Glissant's oeuvre, this introductory chapter is structured in the following way: Section 1.1. presents the general discursive and disciplinary contexts from which the thesis question and hypothesis driving this study emerge. In 1.2., the specific understanding of the political employed in this study of Glissant's politics of relation is conceptualised. 1.3. provides an overview of the secondary literature that has engaged with the question of the political legacy of Glissant's work so far, and section 1.4. specifies the theoretical framework of this study, the archive it interrogates and the conceptual lens adopted in this process.

¹⁸ “*Les mouvements révolutionnaire peuvent agir par le terrorisme, ils peuvent agir par la propagande, par le discours, par l'action de masse, lui c'est comme il agissait par la poésie*“, my translation.

1.1. The Permeable Border Between Writing and Acting

*“Je ne suis pas un homme politique
mais il y a des choses que je ne pouvais pas ne pas faire”¹⁹
– Édouard Glissant (Couffon and Glissant 2001, 50)*

On the back-cover of his book *Frères migrants* (2017), Patrick Chamoiseau, a fellow Martinican writer and close friend of Glissant, recounts the following anecdote: After particular political events Glissant would call him at times and tell him, “We can not let that happen!” (*On ne peut pas laisser passer cela!*), with the emphasis being on the “we can not”. At first, Chamoiseau found his friends' insistence odd since neither of them had the power to change any of the political events Glissant was referring to, despite their standings as relatively well-known figures in the Francophone literary scene. Chamoiseau writes that he only understood later on that Glissant based his 'right and duty to intervene' in matters that concerned him and his 'world-community' precisely on their relative powerlessness as 'poets'. When he was asked about his involvement in the struggle for Martinican autonomy as part of the *Front des Antillais et Guyanais pour l'Autonomie* (FAGA) in the 1950s and 1960s Glissant used a similar expression: “*Je ne suis pas un homme politique mais il y a des choses que je ne pouvais pas ne pas faire*”²⁰ (Couffon and Glissant 2001, 50). Glissant's expression of the need for political action through a negation (“We cannot let this happen”), or even the double negation (“I cannot not do it”), strikes me as remarkable. It marks a certain boundary. More than a marking a fixed separation between 'the poetic' and 'the political' realm, it points out particular moments in which Glissant, as a poet, felt the need to relate his message in a different genre, medium or to a different audience.²¹ The boundary between these different modes of action appears to be a permeable one. Instead of moving into a completely different sphere, Glissant's insistence on responding to particular events could also be read as a charge to move from one temporality into another. Whereas poetic work mostly circulates in relatively small communities, and is marked by its relative opacity, intervening in matters pertaining to larger communities necessarily involves exposing oneself to the hyper-visibility produced by modern mass media. In terms of temporality, Glissant's role of the poet, to which I will return below, might in this regard be consistent with Wai-chee Dimock's proposition to measure the political dimension of literary work in the context of 'planetary time' as “the largest possible scale”, or “the full length and width of our human history and habitat” (2003, 489). Chamoiseau's anecdote alludes to the fact that the

19 “I am not a politician but there are certain things that I could not not do”, my translation.

20 See translation above.

21 In historical political terms, Glissant associated the intervention of poets in political debates as a counter-movement against their historic exclusion from the ancient Greek polis. See Glissant's essay *Images de l'Être, Lieux de l'Imaginaire* (2006, 215). For a discussion of this aspect of his democratic thought also see 5.4.1.

possibility or necessity of switching from this 'slow-moving' and global towards a faster, local or national chronology was a ubiquitous option for Glissant. This provokes a set of questions concerning the kinds of political events that triggered Glissant's insistence to intervene in political affairs in more overt manners. What was at stake in them? Who was concerned by them? And what form did his political interventions take? How was his literary practice related to these 'exceptional' moments?

These preliminary considerations about Glissant's self-perception as a poet and sense of political responsibility suggest that the criteria applied to Glissant's political work need to be differentiated from those applied to statesmen, guerilla fighters, opposition leaders, public intellectuals or mobilisers of social movements. In contrast to these well-established modes of political action, the implications of the 'poet's politics' appear to be significantly more elusive. Nevertheless, for the reasons outlined above, it appears to be an appropriate framework for the study of Glissant's political legacy.

Between or Beyond Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon?

Approaching Glissant from the angle of the political might, at first sight, appear counter-intuitive since Glissant has up until now not been considered as a political writer in a conventional sense of the term. The prevailing image of Glissant – an image which he actively contributed to through what I will refer to as a performative aspect of his life-writing practice – is that of the 'prophet of creolisation'. Especially in contrast to the political projects of his more widely known Martinican compatriots and contemporaries, Césaire and Fanon, whose names respectively stand for the Négritude movement and radical Pan-Africanism as well as Third Worldism, the political implications of Glissant's main concepts, such as creolisation, Tout-Monde and Relation, appear vague at best, even to those familiar with his work. In addition to his opaque style of writing, the poetic descriptions of his main concepts have undoubtedly contributed to the hesitation with which his oeuvre has entered political theoretical debates informed by postcolonial traditions of thought. His repeated employment of such paradoxical notions as his vision of the Tout-Monde as a 'non-totalitarian totality'²² or the aforementioned way of frequenting the world with a commitment to 'changing oneself without losing oneself', 'wondering without erring', and a 'language born out of all languages' appear to be incompatible with a sense of urgency to formulate clear political programmes that tackle structural injustices on a local and global scale.

Glissant's resistance to adopt a polemical tone was arguably one of his main differences to Césaire and Fanon. Whereas his Martinican predecessors occupy canonical positions in postcolonial traditions of thought, Glissant so far remains an anecdotal reference in the field. In cases where one

22 For a presentation of these and other Glissantian concepts see 1.4.1.

or several of his main concepts are taken up, they are usually discussed in an isolated fashion and without reference to the overall philosophical and political project in which they are embedded. In contrast to the general perception of Glissant as the least radical among the three Martinican theorists of decolonisation, Glissant perceived himself to continue the work begun by Césaire and Fanon and extend it into the 21st century. Glissant repeatedly affirmed the historic necessity of Négritude and credited it with restoring a spiritual balance to black people by promoting the history of African civilisations and cultures (Diawara and Glissant 2011, 7). His insistence on moving beyond Négritude was based on his skepticism towards its generalising thrust that relied on a shared essence among black people. Citing an unnamed 'liberation army commander'²³, Glissant explained this point of view to his friend, the Malian film-maker and cultural critic Manthia Diawara, in a filmed interview in 2011:

“One day, a commander of a liberation army told me: 'Wherever black people are suffering, Négritude is completely necessary. But whenever they pick up a rifle, they no longer need it.' In other words, it's a general idea that can be conceived within suffering, but when you particularize yourself by affirming the multiplicity of your being, you no longer need this general theory” (7).

In the same interview, Glissant returned to his positioning vis-à-vis Césaire and Fanon. Describing their respective commitments as building on, instead of completely rejecting one another, he elaborates on how he perceived his own work to be both *between* as well as going *beyond* the positions held by Césaire and Fanon.

“I feel close to Césaire to the extent that he has a vocation to refusal. I feel close to Fanon to the extent that he has a vocation to action. And I feel distant from Césaire to the extent that Négritude appears to me as a general idea that ignores the specificities of black peoples, and I feel distant from Fanon to the extent that his thought is ideological, although he said some stunning things about human nature in *Black Skin, White Masks*. [...] But it's true that his thought was ideologically quite thoroughgoing, and perhaps that hindered the movement of the imaginary Fanon had a great movement toward the world, but it was an ideological one. Césaire had a great movement toward the world, [...] but his movement toward the world was too often a poetical rhetoric. The imaginary of the world is something else. It's the intuition of everything that can be touched in the world, everything that's the same and everything that's different. Above all, everything that's different. What's different in the world constitutes our strength. I always say that the fabric of the living and the canvas of cultures are not created on the basis of the similar, but the different. It is the alliance of differences that creates the fabric of the living and the canvas of cultures” (12).

Read in conjunction with the previous quote, this statement can be read as suggesting a theoretical three-step, rather than a dialectic of thesis and anti-thesis between Négritude, Third Worldism and his own philosophy of relation. From the necessary work of conscientisation pursued

²³ As I will show in section 3.3., the practice of not disclosing his interactions with political actors that were engaged in the liberation struggles of the 1960 is a repeated aspect of Glissant's life-writing practice.

by Négritude, to the armed resistance to colonialism which Fanon endorsed in *The Wretched of the Earth* and in his engagement with the Algerian National Liberation Front, Glissant's statement implies that a third step would consist of exploring another 'imaginary' of and movement towards the world, than Césaire's 'rhetoric' and Fanon's 'ideology'. As this quote implies, the imaginary relies neither on the conceptual distinctions between an essentialised black and white culture nor on a clear distinction between the oppressors and oppressed people of the world. It is noteworthy that this point of view did not emerge at a late stage in Glissant's career, but also appears prominently in a passage in *Le discours antillais* (1981), in which Glissant argued that moving on from Césaire's 'poetic speech' and Fanon's 'political act' would lead towards the exploration of an open 'consciousness of relation' and a 'return to the point from which we started':

“The poetic word of Césaire, the political act of Fanon led us *somewhere*, authorizing by diversion [*détour*] the necessary return to the point [*lieu*] where our problems lay in wait for us. [...] We must return to the point from which we started. Diversion [*Détour*] is not a useful ploy unless it is nourished by reversion [*Retour*]: not a return [*retour*] to the longing for origins, to some immutable state of Being, but a return to the point of entanglement, from which we were forcefully turned away; that is where we must ultimately put to work the forces of creolization, or perish” (CD 25-26).

This passage, along with the concepts of *détour* and *retour*, which I will discuss at a later stage (3.3.2.), points to another difference that Glissant considered important for his own political project. In a footnote to the above cited passage Glissant added that “For us, Martinicans, this place already is the Caribbean: but we do not know it” (CD 25). The call to reconcile *détour* and *retour* towards a 'profound reconnection with ourselves', demands an engagement with the local political issues of ones own place, as a necessary step towards being able to relate to the diversity of the world at large. This is where Glissant claimed that Césaire's philosophical 'return to Africa' and Fanon's struggle against colonialism racism outside the Caribbean differed from his own positioning as Martinican and Caribbean (“us, Martinicans”). Approaching Glissant's politics through his proximity to and distance from Césaire and Fanon is not meant as a comprehensive discussion of the aptitude of Glissant's reading of Césaire and Fanon. This would require a different study altogether. Instead, what I find remarkable about Glissant's self-positioning with regards to these two key intellectual figures of Afro-Caribbean thought and the historical currents they represent, is that Glissant did not claim a superiority of his project over those of his contemporaries, but instead emphasised where it differed, where it aimed at moving on from them. Because of how intimately the lives and works of Césaire and Fanon were involved with specific political struggles, Glissant's comparison with them also suggests a more extensive exploration of his own political project. The general allusions about the characteristics of his political stance in this selection of quotes – the 'vocation to refuse', the 'vocation to act', 'the imaginary of the world', 'the return to ones

own location', leave a lot open for interpretation and will therefore reappear as central themes to be interrogated in my own reading of his work. Whereas the kind of individual, collective and institutional projects aligned with or emerging in opposition to Négritude, Pan-Africanism and the Third World Movement have received intense scrutiny from postcolonial scholars, we do not know what the equivalent for Glissant's Tout-Monde would look like. How does one do politics with an imaginary of the world? How does one fight oppression with Relation? How does one reconcile a commitment to local and global political struggles? What kind of communities are in tune with the forces of creolisation? Reading Glissant as a self-proclaimed 'brother of Fanon' (CD 25) and 'son of Césaire',²⁴ rather than their political opponent, forms part of the general philosophical framework informing the approach of this thesis.

The Political in Postcolonial Political Theory

Despite a broad consensus among Glissant scholars that his work was 'political' (albeit to a varying degree) throughout his career, ten years after Glissant's passing the question of how his political legacy can be evaluated is subject to an ongoing academic debate. Notwithstanding the relative currency of Glissant's name and several of his concepts in the fields of cultural and literary studies, the political implications of these concepts are rarely being alluded to, let alone fully explored. The hesitation or unease to attach particular political meanings to Glissant's name can, in part, be attributed to the fact that Glissant himself never explicitly foregrounded this dimension of his work. Searching for the keywords 'politics' or 'political' in most of Glissant's writings will not head promising results for any scholar interested in finding out more about the matter. In fact, the notion of 'politics of relation', only appeared towards the very end of Glissant's career, specifically in the essay books *Une nouvelle région du monde* (2005), *Philosophie de la Relation* (2009) and in the pamphlets *L'Intraitable beauté du monde – Adresse à Barack Obama* (2009) and *Quand les murs tombent* (2007) which Glissant co-wrote with Chamoiseau. At this point in his career, Glissant's work was subjected to a series of harsh criticisms by Anglophone literary critics who reproached its alleged 'apolitical degeneration', an accusation that was spearheaded by Peter Hallward's PhD thesis, published as *Absolutely Postcolonial – Writing Between the Singular and the Specific* (2001) (1.3.2.).

In addition to the above mentioned interest in the political dimension of Glissant's work in relation to Césaire and Fanon, another important discursive context in which this work is situated has been framed by David Scott's call from more than two decades ago, that the theoretical work on the question of the political remains an urgent task for postcolonial scholars. In *Refashioning*

²⁴ I am referring to Césaire's self-perception as a father figure to the critical intellectual currents Négritude gave rise to (Vergès and Césaire 2005), as well as to Glissant's late acknowledgement of the central role Césaire played for the development of his own poetic practice in *Philosophie de la Relation* (PHR 128-37).

Futures – Criticism After Postcoloniality (1999), Scott refers to the moment “after postcoloniality”, as a “moment when hitherto established and authoritative conceptual paradigms and political projects [...] seem no longer adequate to the task of the present, and when, at the same time, new paradigms and projects have yet to assert themselves fully in place of the old” (10). Differentiating the task of critical thought in the 21st century from the anticolonial moment of the mid 20th century, Scott argues that whereas the focus in the 1950s and 1960s was on a 'theory of politics' as a 'theory of liberation' within the conceptual confines of the nation-state, “what was left undertheorised was the question of a decolonisation of representation and of the conceptual apparatus through which these anticolonial projects were thought out” (12). This was the main task to which postcolonial theorists committed themselves from the late 1970s onwards. What got left behind as a result of this focus, according to Scott, was the question of the political itself, “a deferral of the question of the renewal of a theory of politics. Or rather, postcoloniality operated by implicitly occupying the horizon of nationalist politics already defined by the anticolonial project” (14). In the 1980s and 1990s, when postcolonial criticism focussed strongly on issues of representation, a new hegemony of neoliberal globalisation emerged and, with the question of global injustice remaining unresolved, it was no longer clear what 'overcoming' Western power actually meant and how alternatives to it could be thought (14). For Scott, a response to this 'crisis' of postcolonial thought would include, moving from a 'politics of theory', that is primarily concerned with how the West perceives the non-West, to a 'new theory of politics' (18). As he re-emphasises in the *Coda to Refashioning Futures*, “what we need is a practice of folding these tools”, and he refers here to anticolonial nationalist projects and the tools of deconstruction, “into a new domain in which a new set of preoccupations becomes visible, a set of preoccupations defined not so much by the politics of epistemology as by a renewal of the theoretical question of the political” (224). This would bring about a shift away from a focus on colonialist representation towards a joining of the 'radical political tradition of Bandung' (224).²⁵

In his book *Politics and Postcolonial Theory – African Inflections* (2001), Pal Ahluwalia takes up Scott's point and argues that while postcolonial theory has become synonymous with literary and cultural theory, and is mainly produced and studied in English or Literature departments, it has largely failed to transcend disciplinary boundaries – despite the interdisciplinarity inherent in most postcolonial scholarship (15). He thereby also implies that postcolonial theory needs to engage with overtly political matters in order to have a lasting effect on political theory and move across, or out of the disciplinary confines of literary studies (15). Asking

25 As Robert Shilliam has outlined in several studies dedicated to the 'Spirit of Bandung' associated with the Asian-African conference held in Indonesia in 1955, Bandung stands for the possibility of the '(post)colonised' “to break free from the global architecture laid by the coloniser“, and to “generate alternative futures arrived at through the principles of equality over hierarchy, peace over war, cooperation over conflict, and self-determination over dependency“ (2015, 3-4).

what such an engagement with the political would entail, Ahluwalia argues that it should not be mistaken for addressing an apparent lack of interest in material or 'real world' matters on the part of postcolonial studies because of its literary locus – a charge that has most prominently been levelled against postcolonialism from a Marxist standpoint. As Ahluwalia points out, a critique of capitalism and its transformations has been an integral part of postcolonial tradition. As a way of countering the critique of a postcolonial removal from social experience, he proposes to approach the issue via Edward Said's notion of 'worldliness'. Ahluwalia describes this worldliness in the following terms:

“the recognition that the text does not exist outside the world but that it is a part of the world which it addresses. It is equally important for the critic to recognise his or her engagement with the world, and so, for Said, the worldliness of the critic is just as important as the worldliness of the text. This sense of worldliness pervades his work and is poignantly evident in his overtly political work on Palestine” (17).

By referring to Said's engagement for Palestine, Ahluwalia puts both a strong emphasis on the relationship between the textual and non-textual dimensions, as much as he re-inscribes a conventional understanding of political engagement of literary work differs from Scott's arguments. While both points are valid and of importance for my study of Glissant's politics, it is Scott's call for a new theorisation of the political from a postcolonial perspective that appears to be the most pressing issue for me. With the intervention of decolonial theory in recent years, as a tradition which has to some extent cast itself as the more radical or *political* alternative to postcolonial theory,²⁶ the question can no longer be whether these traditions privilege discursive and cultural over material and political matters. Two decades after the publication of the aforementioned texts, postcolonial theory has, moreover, moved out of its traditional disciplinary home into fields such as history and anthropology, and is also starting to make greater forays into political theory.

As Nalini Persram writes in the introduction to the volume *Postcolonialism and Political Theory* (2001), this movement of postcolonial studies into the realm of political theory requires that the latter “renounce the primacy of order and, consequently, the disposition to conceive universal, homogenous and orderable subjects” (xviii). Vice versa, postcolonial thought cannot avoid a close engagement with the issues of “power, action, political institutions, freedom, stability, change, membership, equality, obligation, domination, and justice” (xviii). As she points out by quoting Wendy Brown, “politicization through theory of a given process of relation is quite different than a theoretical understanding of the political: Power may be ubiquitous, but that is the very reason it 'cannot be equated with the problem of how we do and ought to order collective life'” (xviii). My point here is not to rehearse the discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of postcolonial and decolonial traditions of thought. Taking their productivity for research projects interested in

26 With regards to the differentiation between these two intellectual currents I concur with the view expressed by Bartels et al. when they write: “We emphatically reject more recent sectarian tendencies in the field which promote a categorical divide between so-called decolonial schools of thought and activism, and postcolonial paradigms” (2019, 6).

questions of structural injustice as a given, my interest in this study is in *pushing the question of the political* as a contribution to this tradition of thought, and thus pursuing the line of conceptual work on the notion of the political from a postcolonial perspective called for by Scott, Ahluwalia, Persram and others.

Why does it make sense to turn to the work of Glissant for such an enterprise? Apart from further exploring Glissant's own claim that his work offers a next step from Césaire and Fanon, whose works have already been discussed in postcolonial political theory,²⁷ one could also refer to John E. Drabinski and Marisa Parham's argument that “if, for better or worse, the West has been able to appeal to root and tradition as philosophy's ground zero, as that which must in the act of philosophical inquiry be recovered, remembered or mourned, then we could say that *Glissant* instead concretizes a post-Western model of thinking” (2015, 2). In addition to being acknowledged as one of the most important postcolonial Francophone writers who got to observe some of the most formative movements in the Francophone world in the second part of the 20th century – from independence and departmentalisation to neoliberal globalisation –, this widely held view affirms that Glissant's work might offer an alternative to Eurocentric models of thought that are, as Persram argues still largely unproblematised in political theory. Forming part of a larger tradition that is informed by the experience of slavery, colonialism and the struggles for decolonisation, traditions which have been credited for providing grounds for epistemological innovation and new ways of speaking meaningfully to contexts functioning outside or in tension with Eurocentric knowledge systems, Glissant's work and the impressive list of concepts he has produced in the course of his career, thus appear as a particularly promising archive that might contribute to a transition from the established theory of politics towards the formulation of a different theory of the political. As I have introduced above, by referring to the notion of the poet's politics, this study necessarily entails the bridging of disciplinary boundaries between literary and political studies, on the basis that the imaginative realm offers new potentials for the elaboration of new political ideas or new ideas of the political.

Thesis Question and Hypothesis

The three main questions underlying this PhD project can be posed in the following terms: Firstly, *what is* Glissant's politics of relation? What is its *direction* and what are its main *characteristics*? From this line of enquiry a set of sub-questions emerge pertaining to the following concerns: What is Glissant's conception of the political? What is the relationship between political thought and action in his conception of politics? Which position does the politics of relation occupy

²⁷ See, for example, Gary Wilder *Freedom Time – Negritude, Decolonization and the Future of the World* (2015), Brook Kirchgassner's *Frantz Fanon and the Challenge of Political Theory* (2013), and Ina Kerner's *Frantz Fanon in der Politikwissenschaft* (2016).

in the framework of Glissant's philosophy more generally? Secondly, *how* can the political dimension of Glissant's work be described? Tied to this question are a set of queries pertaining to how his work and life can be read in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of his political practice, and about how his literary work relates to his political work, for now understood in the conventional sense of these terms. Thirdly, *where* does Glissant's politics of relation fit in with other modes of decolonial, anticapitalist and antiracist political thought and practices?

The main hypothesis on which this work rests, is that Glissant's 'imaginary of relation' and the political strategies informed by it, offer a possibility to think differently about a set of central points of contemporary political contestation, including among others the make-up of political communities, institutional set-ups and identities. Accordingly, the central claim this work is committed to exploring is that Glissant's politics of relation has the potential to contribute to the invention of new modes of political action, by foregrounding the imperative for political creativity *within and outside of* conventional realms of political contestation. The assumption from which this study proceeds in this regard holds that it is possible to describe Glissant's politics of relation as a *specific political practice*. By this I mean that Glissant's political engagements can be seen as more than *just political* or *politically committed*. Instead of remaining at this general level, my claim at the onset of this research is that Glissant's political practice can be described along the lines of *a particular kind of marronage*, an intellectual marronage. In historic terms, maroons escaped from slavery, individually or collectively and fled into the hills or forests outside the plantation. They sought to survive and created communities that were radically different from the slave system they fled. As I elaborate in 1.4.3., my understanding of this term both refers to this concrete historic meaning while also abstracting from it in important ways. The identification of Glissant's political practice as a form of intellectual marronage necessitates a relational or transversal reading of his life and work. Such a reading necessarily understands his political practice to comprise his abstract political thought, his diverse writing practices as well as extra-textual activities geared towards the creation of (or collaboration with) specific institutions and public interventions. Taking these different aspects of what I consider to constitute Glissant's political archive into account will make it possible to discern a set of strategies that run across the different phases, publications and initiatives of his life, and shape the overall contour of his political practice. This horizontal approach will, moreover, reveal that the political dimension occupies a central position in Glissant's philosophy of relation. Instead of singling out a particular time-period (e.g. the early/the late Glissant) or a genre of writing (theoretical, fictional, biographical), my approach is premised on the necessity of reading Glissant's work *as a whole*, thereby transcending such established divisions as

those between writing and activism, between the poetic and the political. As I will outline in part 1.2., the interrogation of these assumptions requires the adoption of a broad and yet specific conception of the political that, in part, transcends the traditional understanding of the term as a realm apart from other areas of social and cultural life.

Glissant's Philosophy of Relation as Theoretical Framework

As I will further elaborate in section 1.4. of this introduction, the main theoretical framework of this study is Glissant's philosophy of relation itself. Although Glissant has not elaborated on the role he accorded to the political dimension in his philosophy, I will argue that it can be considered as being of central importance based on the way he described it in connection to several other key concepts (1.4.1.). Mapping the overall conceptual configuration shaping the philosophy of relation, will thus serve as the basis on which it will become possible to trace the general thrust of Glissant's political practice as well as its more nuanced characteristics. In addition to the general *Glissantian* thrust of this study, I will repeatedly borrow theoretical insights from the fields of autobiography studies on life-writing (Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson), narratology, poststructural theory on the notion of the political and community (Jacques Rancière) at different points throughout this thesis. The overall aim of this combination of approaches is to merge perspectives from literary with political studies to analyse as many of the specificities of Glissant's political practice as possible. In line with this approach, and with Glissant's own conception of his work, which he perceived to form a *complete* or *total oeuvre*,²⁸ his *life* or his *performance* will be consulted alongside close readings of his written work as forming part of his political archive in my attempt to discern several political strategies cutting across his oeuvre (1.4.2.). Phrased differently, since his publications and personal trajectory will be studied as a single corpus without strong references being made to chronological or thematic blocks, the focus of attention will not be placed on the development of the notion of the political in Glissant's work *over time*, but will instead be concerned with *its philosophical embeddedness, its general direction and the specific characteristics shaping it*.

This relational reading of Glissant's oeuvre responds to a perceived weakness in the secondary literature on Glissant noted by his bibliographer Alain Baudot, namely that the nature of his overall project tends to 'remain buried' owing to a reluctance of scholars to “transgress all borders, geopolitically, ideologically, epistemologically, one that would require to read differently and primarily from other locations”²⁹ (1993, xlix). Although this study is mainly committed to

28 Glissant has repeatedly emphasised this perception of his work, among others in the following formulation: “a complete oeuvre, global, which unfolds from book to book. The essays, the poems, the theatre pieces form a whole” (*une oeuvre totale, globale, qui s'articule livre à livre. Les essais, les poèmes, les pièces de théâtre constituent un tout*) (Baudot, nr. 1340).

29 “*l'audace de transgresser toutes les frontières, géopolitique, idéologiques, épistémologiques. Nous devons apprendre à lire autrement, et surtout à partir d'autres lieux*”, my translation.

bringing the fields of literary studies and political studies in conversation with one another, the approach pursued in this thesis proposes a twist to Alexandre Leupin's claim that "one can only speak about the unlimited by limiting it" (*on ne peut pas parler de l'illimité qu'en le limitant*) (2016, 23). In making the claim that a philosophical point of view is the only appropriate angle to take for a study of Glissant's work, Leupin rejects the possibility that a political and postcolonial reading could be 'up to the task' (*à hauteur du objet*). This view is based on the conviction that "thinking the world, the future of the world, through poetry, the 'novel', the essay, is a properly philosophical enterprise of moving beyond these outdated contradictions, which is the ultimate ambition of Glissant's project"³⁰ (23). As will become apparent throughout this work, I do not dissociate the tradition of political studies from philosophy, nor do I associate a postcolonial political reading of Glissant's work with a limitation to 'outdated contradictions'. Instead I make the claim that these perspectives express a view that contends that 'one can not speak about the unlimited by limiting it. In pragmatic terms, this implies the necessity of an interdisciplinary or even transdisciplinary approach that I associate with the method of mapping as outlined in the preface.

Contributions to Academic Debates

Pursuing this line of research as outlined above, promises to contribute to several academic debates, which I will here briefly sketch out before elaborating more comprehensively on them throughout the literature review in section 1.3. In a first instance, framing Glissant as a political writer of a different kind and placing the notion of the politics of relation at the forefront of a monograph about his work directly contributes to debates among Glissant scholars. As I will elaborate in section 1.3., the debate on his political legacy has so far been held without reference to different conceptions of the political. This has led to both accusations and celebrations of Glissant's political legacy – as either being irrelevant/conservative or radical/progressive – that both rest on equally vague theoretical grounds, but also on fragmented readings of Glissant's oeuvre owing to a categorical exclusion of a large part of his work as being politically irrelevant. For the growing community of Glissant scholars, this study thereby aims at providing new grounds for an engagement with Glissant's political legacy by attempting to produce a comprehensive overview of his work read from a political angle.

Working towards a specification of Glissant's *political thought and practice* in the field of postcolonial theory moreover addresses the issue that a prioritising of 'cultural politics' or 'identity politics' is incapable of offering concrete political and economic institutional alternatives to the dominant nation-state, democratic and neoliberal frameworks they criticise. A related charge levelled against postcolonial scholars has been that it is primarily concerned with the past and not

³⁰ "*penser le monde et le futur du monde, dans la poésie, le 'roman', l'essai, est une tentative proprement philosophique de dépasser ces contradictions désuètes, telle est l'ambition ultime du programme glissantienne*", my translation.

the future. In this sense, I perceive my investigation of Glissant's politics of relation as a postcolonial political practice, which is by definition future oriented, to directly respond to the “simplistic reduction of the 'postcolonial' to dealing with the past [which] is itself the result of colonialism's temporality, of colonisers' strategic use and conceptions of time” (Bartels et al. 2019, 171). In its commitment to a reconciliation of radical cultural relativism with a humanist universalism – as expressed in the afore-cited belief that 'widespread consent to specific opacities' bears the potential of 'reconciling the hard line inherent in any politics and the questioning essential to any relation' (PR 192) –,³¹ Glissant's philosophy is less concerned with the *critical* work of pointing out the violence inflicted in the name of the modernist project, and more interested in *imagining* and effectively *creating* alternatives to the status quo. It thus differs from work produced in the postcolonial trajectory that takes the nation-state as a given and seeks to effect progressive changes within its conceptual confines. Although these alternatives are not presented in a conventional form in Glissant's work – such as party politics, demonstrations, or the organisation of social movements –, and could thus be seen as operating on a *smaller, less visible or more opaque realm*, I believe that rendering these political practices more visible by naming them, can contribute to a growing vocabulary of political resistances that could generally be called postcolonial, but also shares several characteristics with other, so-called minor, modes of cosmopolitanism, a global vision that is perhaps best expressed in Glissant's phrase “*Agis dans ton lieu, pense avec le monde (détail et totalité)*”³² (PHR 46). Several other fields of study, to which an elaboration of the political dimension of Glissant's oeuvre can contribute valuable insights are theoretical attempts to explore alternative political nation-state form, by exploring the potential of such notions as non-sovereignty, non-statism or meta-out and which are broadly situated between the study of culture and politics and are discussed in such fields as Black Studies, Native American Studies, African Studies and Caribbean Studies.

The field in which the exploration of the political potential of Glissant's work has so far received the most attention is the field of literary studies. In this realm, the main contribution of my work will be in the way I explore the synergies between the fields of literary studies and political studies that, for the most part, lie dormant. While literary approaches to Glissant's work are, for the most part, aware of his political concerns, most of these studies largely remain on a textual level in their interrogation of these concerns. The main interest from this perspective could be said to centre around issues of *representation*. This tends to translate into questions of how particular political struggles are represented in Glissant's work of fiction, or to what extent his literary techniques can

31 For a discussion of the tension between universalism and cultural relativism in Glissant's work see 6.3., for a general overview of this debate in political theory see Holger Zapf (2016).

32 “Act in your location, think with the world (detail and totality)”, my translation.

be seen as mirroring his concepts of relation, creolisation or opacity, whose political implications remain vague. Relating these textual practices to more concrete iterations of Glissant's political practice, or what Said referred to as its worldliness, could serve to make allusions to the political dimension of his work more rigorous and concrete. The field of political studies, on the other hand, has so far shown little interest in engaging with Glissant's work and is generally marked by a scepticism towards literary texts and especially poetic or experimental ways of writing that resist clear-cut categorisations. The consideration of insights gained from postcolonial perspectives that traditionally take literature seriously as theory *and* practice, has only recently begun in the field. Establishing further conversations between political theory and postcolonial discourses could therefor contribute to enriching, and problematising the established Western canon of the former by entering into a dialogue with diversity of global traditions of thought outside the field of comparative political theory. Although debates within this tradition can be credited for expanding the archive of political theory 'beyond a Western monologue' (Dallmayr 2004), the at times neat geographic divisions employed this field risk reproducing a cultural comparativism (Persram 2007) that is easily troubled when the complex blends of political traditions that are expressed in the theories of individual political thinkers are acknowledged (Roberts 2015, 143).

Vice versa, introducing the political thought of Glissant into the field of postcolonial studies aims at sparking new explorative research into the forms a postcolonial political theory could take, thereby pointing to the importance of counterbalancing its traditional emphasis on modes of representation, culture and identity. Situated at the intersection of political theory and postcolonial studies, a nexus that warrants to be further strengthened, this study is designed to function as a revitalising attempt at translating poetic productions into political debates. As mentioned before, the poetic nature of Glissant's writing might deter scholars who are used to transparent and clearly structured prose, from showing greater interest in his body of work. Avoiding to engage with at times opaque literary production, might prevent political studies from exploring a rich archive in which political struggles are recorded, theorised, and re-interpreted. In this sense, writing about Glissant's politics in the form of an academic thesis is in itself an act of translation from poetic writing to more widely accessible prose. Bridging the disciplinary boundaries between literary and political studies, could thus serve to connect dimensions of the political that belong together, an argument which I will substantiate through a comprehensive overview of the secondary literature concerned with political dimension of Glissant's work in section 1.3.

After having outlined the broad research decisions and disciplinary considerations at the basis of this thesis, the following section is dedicated to an overview of debates in the field of political theory concerning the conceptual differences between a traditional (narrow) understanding

of politics and postmodern (broader) conceptions that are being discussed under the label of 'the political'. Tracing the main lines of this discussion is important for my thesis in so far as it allows me to define the understanding of the political at the basis of my work on Glissant's politics of relation. As will become apparent in the ensuing discussion, Glissant's conception of politics combines aspects from traditional and postmodern conceptions of the political in a way that is characteristic of the black radical intellectual tradition, to which I consider Glissant's work to be closely related.

1.2. Politics and the Political – Implications of a Conceptual Difference

“literature provides a different sensorium, a different way of linking a power to perceptibly affect and a power to signify. Now, a different community of sense of of the perceptible, a different relationship between words and beings, also means a different common world and a different people”
– Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Literature* (2011, 14)

In order to provide an overview of the different ways in which the political dimension of Glissant's work has been studied, and will be studied here, requires an awareness of prevalent conceptions of both 'politics' and 'the political'. This theoretical grounding not only serves as the basis on which I will discuss the secondary literature on the political dimension of Glissant's work as (knowingly or unknowingly, overtly or covertly) employing specific conceptions of the political in the following section (1.3.). It is, moreover, important in so far as it provides a more general *theoretical basis on which Glissant's politics of relation can be made visible*, or to put it differently, *a theoretical basis which makes it possible speak of Glissant's textual and non-textual work as constituting a specific political practice*, which is one of the main intentions of this study. Additionally, an awareness of the existing political theoretical debates on these concepts, also serves as an important point of reference against which *Glissant's own conception of politics and the political* can be described, as it emerges in his abstract political thought as well as in a variety of concrete practices and interventions. I will begin this work in this section by outlining contemporary debates in the field of political theory on different conceptions of politics and the political (1.2.1.), before zooming in the 'politics of literature' by paying specific attention to the work of Jacques Rancière (1.2.2.). In a third step, I will relate these disciplinary debates in the fields of political and literary studies to discussions that, to a large extent, fall outside or across the boundaries of these disciplines, and mainly emerge from the fields of literature and the arts, especially within the black radical tradition (1.2.3.).

1.2.1. 'Speaking about everything that constitutes a community' – Rediscovering the Political Essence of Politics

What 'politics' is remains subject to complex political theoretical debates, and significantly varies among cultures. This being said, a startling reluctance to consider non-Western conceptualisations of the term prevails in the mainstream of the discipline of political studies. As with the concept of democracy, many political theorists are adamant that 'the Greeks invented politics' (Bedorf 2010, 7). Etymologically referring to the Greek institutional space of the *polis*, or

the words *polites* (citizens of the *polis*), *ta politika* (the public, the communal, a matter concerning or engaging all citizens), *politike téchne* (the art of leadership and the administration of public affairs), or *politikos* (that which relates to the public affairs of the polis), the necessity of separating the sphere of politics from other social spheres, such as the 'private realm' or the economy, is usually also attributed to the ancient Greeks, namely to Aristotle (384-322 BC). In his view the political sphere was something fundamentally different than the family or economic affairs, a unique process in which 'free and equal people' communicate about their different opinions and interests to reach agreements about fundamental questions pertaining to all (Roth 2017, 47-51).

More recent historical attempts to define politics in the 20th century tend to refer to Max Weber's *Politik als Beruf* (Politics as a Vocation), in which Weber defined politics as “the pursuit of power over the state” and “the pursuit for a portion of power or for influencing the division of power whether it is between states, or between groups of people which the state encompasses” (1946). Other popular definitions of the term also emphasise the conflict and power-based nature of politics. Niccolò Machiavelli's (1513) definition of politics as the “totality of techniques for the maintenance and creation of state power”, and Carl von Clausewitz's (1832) phrase that “politics is the continuation of war with different means” are the most frequently cited definitions in this tradition of thought.

Less conflict- and state-centric definitions tend to speak more generally of 'the preparation, making or execution of binding decisions for a group or society' (Meyer 2003, 41), or “the activity by which differing interests within a given unit of rule are conciliated by giving them a share in power in proportion to their importance to the welfare and survival of the whole community” (Scruton 2007, 535). Acting politically, in this larger sense means that someone is engaging with the *polis*, with the collective or the community, to shape it according to his or her convictions. Greater emphasis is thus placed on the open-endedness of politics, as well as on the binding and collective nature of decisions emerging from this process. From this perspective, politics *can be more* than the 'art or science of government', or of 'influencing governmental policy' or 'winning and holding control over a government' and would, for example, also include non-party, non-governmental and cultural activism. Without venturing deeper into a debate which one between the two aspects should be emphasised more (Kreise and Niederberger 2011, 290), the main purpose of these initial considerations is to point out that these dominant conceptions (at times inadvertently) define *what gets to count as political* in everyday discourse but also in academic literature.

For the purpose of my argument, it is important to note that definitions of politics that centre around the state or the pursuit of power within or between states categorically exclude less *state-centred* or *organised* forms of political action. As this study will show, most of Glissant's political

practice can be seen as belonging to this 'other sphere' of politics. On the other hand, definitions of politics that are less state-centric or institutionalist and instead emphasise the importance of acting together in smaller groups and participation to find solutions to communal conflicts tend to *assume the existence of a pre-existing political community* within a set institutional framework. Modes of political action that operate without immediate reference to a pre-existing political community, but work towards *creating new forms of communities that do not adhere to traditional criteria of sovereignty* thereby stand the risk of remaining invisible even to these 'broader' conceptions of politics.

As a relatively young academic discipline emerging in the aftermath of the Second World War, the discipline of political science struggled to delineate the autonomy of its field of research from closely related disciplines by, to some extent, essentialising politics as a social sphere apart.³³ 'The political' as the broad conceptual context from which different kinds of politics emerge, did thus not feature prominently in political theoretical debates but was assumed as self-evidently tied to 'politics as a vocation'. In the course of the 20th century, entries in political dictionaries on 'the political' are thus hard to find. The appearance of the term as a concept deserving particular theoretical attention is now being traced back to debates in French political philosophy in the early 1980s. Emerging from the claim that what is currently institutionalised and discursively framed as politics and political practice *does not adequately capture the full scope of the political*, several proponents of French political philosophy have worked towards a differentiation of the political from politics. In recent years, this discussion has moved out of the French academy and into the larger community of political theorists.

The (Re)Discovery of the Political

The insight that traditional conceptions of politics risk leaving a vast area of potentially political actions unaccounted for, is at the basis of a renewed debate among political theorists around the conceptual difference between politics conventionally understood, and a larger area referred to as 'the political'. Pierre Rosanvallon has formulated the main concern driving this debate in the following terms:

“To speak about the political and not politics, to speak about power and the law, about the state and the nation, about equality and justice, about identity and difference, about *citoyenneté* and civilness, in short: to speak about everything that constitutes a community – apart from party rivalry, the exercise of power, daily governing business and the usual life of institutions”³⁴ (quoted in Marchart 2010, 13)

33 The so-called tripartite dimensions of politics as denoting the *polity*, as the constitution of the community and its institutional order, *politics*, as the political process, and *policy* as a specific program of action, can be considered as forming part of this project (Meyer 2003, 55).

34 “*Sich auf das Politische und nicht auf die Politik beziehen, d.h. von Macht und von Gesetz, vom Staat und der Nation, von der Gleichheit und der Gerechtigkeit, von der Identität und der Differenz, von der citoyenneté und Zivilität, kurzum: heißt von allem sprechen, was eine Gemeinwesen jenseits unmittelbarer parteilicher Konkurrenz um die Ausübung von Macht, tagtäglichen Regierungshandelns und des gewöhnlichen Lebens der Institutionen konstituiert*“, my translation.

Several scholars who have responded to this line of thought and, in the process, substantially contributing towards rendering non-traditional political practices visible, particularly as they are articulated in the realms of literature and the arts. An engagement with this debate is thus well placed for an engagement with what I have earlier framed as Glissant's poet's politics.

With their essay *Retreating the Political* Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy (1997) have been credited with the publication of a programmatic text for this field of inquiry. Instead of taking the political as an independent social field as a given, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy differentiate between *le politique* (the political) and *la politique* (politics) based on the concern that a 'political essence' remains hidden as long as political theory is primarily concerned with the functioning of the political system. In a conceptual move that goes against the disciplinary autonomy of political science, they insisted that 'the essence of the philosophical is bound to the essence of the political' (58). As is the case with most theorists who have taken up this charge since, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy proceed from the assumption that there is a 'loss' or 'retreat' of the political from the sphere of professional politics which warrants to be rescued or rediscovered. Instead of a commitment to conceptual 'discriminatory power' (*Trennschärfe*), the main concern of this line of work is thus of an immediate political nature.

Depending on the specific concerns of the scholars participating in this debate, this 'loss' or 'lack' of the truly political essence in official politics or the functioning of the political system has been attributed either to an increasing technocratisation or managerial approach, the 'colonisation' of politics by economic reasoning, or a growing disinterest in politics in large parts of the population. For Oliver Marchart, the contemporary political moment is marked by a 'post-fundamentalist' era that began with the end of the so-called Cold War (2010, 15-16), which is marked by the end of a belief in fundamental principles on which a political practice could be based. What is rarely acknowledged by theorists, who identify this alleged deficiency in a properly 'political essence' in contemporary politics as a relatively recent development, is the thoroughly Eurocentric perspective on this development. In section 1.2.3. I will revisit this bias and its implications with respect to the black radical tradition. Suffice to say at this point that in colonial settings, the difference between 'real politics' and the 'false politics' of politicians was more apparent than in Western industrialised nation-states. Whereas, in the West, the development of constitutional democracies gave rise to optimism regarding the capacities of politicians to bring about social progress, in (post)colonial settings the difference between professional (white) politicians and (black) freedom fighters, gave rise to a more widespread awareness of political practices that take place outside the realm of official political institutions, particularly in the arts. What makes the political theoretical debate about the discrepancy between 'actual politics' and 'official politics' nevertheless of interest to my

thesis, is that, more than a critical gesture bemoaning the current state of affairs, the commitment to re-thinking what it means to act or to be political is, for many scholars, a possibility to invent new forms of progressive political practices that, as Thomas Bedorf has pointed out, share a common opposition to liberal political philosophy and its reliance on the universalistic claims of the Enlightenment project and the Kantian belief in a singular conceptions of reason, human nature (2016, 35), concerns that are shared by postcolonial studies as well.

The Normative, Hegemonic and Disruptive Dimensions of the Political

Among scholars who are engaged in the debate about the political, Bedorf has identified different traditions in which the political is either referred to as a normative term, as denoting forms of hegemony and as signalling a moment of disruption (36). By briefly engaging with these three conceptions from Bedorf's categorisation that are particularly pertinent to this study will allow me to describe Glissant's own conception of the political and concrete practices in relation to some of the main authors featuring in this debate.

According to Bedorf, a first approach towards conceptions of the political, can be labelled as normative in so far as the scholars working within this line of thought measure specific political practices in a given time and space against an ideal notion of politics. Bedorf cites Hannah Arendt's arguments towards a renewal of Greek ideas of the political as a prime example of this philosophic tradition (16). For Arendt, the 'retreat' of the political sphere, in an Aristotelian sense, has a history dating back to ancient Rome and the legalistic approach to politics developed at this time (17). Whereas, for Arendt, politics is associated with enforcement and legitimisation of a particular rule, "The political would be the potentiality of common action whereas politics is the coordination of common interests, for which the many are not necessary, because in an ideal case it can be delegated to a single individual"³⁵ (18). The 'potentiality of acting together' emphasises another central aspect of Arendt's political thought, which Marchart refers to as being representative of an *associative* thought of the political. In this tradition, for an action to be considered political necessitates that people freely associate with one another in their plurality, in public spaces, and motivated by their shared concerns about the common good. *Acting in concert* or *acting together*, without knowing what the outcomes of these interactions will be, are for Marchart key notions in this tradition (2010, 35-37).

Bedorf distinguishes a second group of approaches under the title of hegemony, a tradition for which he considers Carl Schmitt's definition of the political, as requiring a differentiation between friends and enemies to be emblematic (2016, 20). From a Schmittian angle, whose

35 "Das Politische wäre vielmehr die Potentialität des gemeinsamen Handelns gegenüber der Politik als Steuerung der gemeinsamen Belange, wozu es der Vielen nicht bedarf, weil sie idealtypisch letztlich einem Einzelnen übertragen werden kann", my translation.

philosophy is infamous for its compatibility and direct association with Nazi ideology, all conflicts and oppositions can potentially be considered political once they evolve into a fundamental antagonism (21). Since Schmitt's conception of the political necessitates an external enemy from which another political group dissociates itself, Marchart has labelled his work as standing for a *dissociative* tradition (2010, 38-42). Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau are also considered as belonging to this *hegemonic* (Bedorf) or *dissociative* (Marchart) tradition that views the political as essentially defined by antagonisms. In contrast to Schmitt, Mouffe and Laclau do, however, not perceive the binarism of enemies and friends in essentialist terms. Perceiving these political differences to be, above all, discursively constructed through actual encounters, they identify a disappearance of the political from the sphere of politics whenever antagonisms are overlooked, misunderstood or disavowed (Bedorf 2016, 21). The normative claim that can be deduced from Mouffe and Laclau is that, instead of disavowing identitarian antagonisms, they should be 'tamed' in such a way that an *antagonistic* relationship or enmity can be turned into an *agonal* conflict between opponents, since a continuous *antagonistic* conflict would threaten the foundations of a given democratic system (23). Mouffe and Laclau's agonism refers to the Greek word *agon* (struggle), deriving from the tradition of athletic contests, which are marked by a respect for the opponent and an acknowledgement that the opponent forms a necessary constituent for the competition to continue.³⁶

Bedorf groups a third set of approaches under the term 'disruption', a tradition which Marchart still refers to as dissociative. The work of Jacques Rancière, to whose conception of the political I dedicate a separate sub-section (1.2.2.), stands as representative of this tradition of thought. Claiming that

“nothing is political in itself. But anything may become political if it gives rise to a meeting of these two logics. The same thing – an election, a strike, a demonstration – can give rise to politics or not give rise to politics. A strike is not political when it calls for reforms rather than a better deal or when it attacks the relationships of authority rather than the inadequacy of wages. It is political when it reconfigures the relationships that determine the workplace in its relation to the community“ (Rancière 1999, 32).

In contrast to the two approaches outlined above, Bedorf reads Rancière as placing greater emphasis on *how* an action appears, *which form* it takes, than on any objective criteria of *what* kind of action it is. With Rancière, questions of aesthetics thus move into the foreground of political analysis. A demonstration can, through this conceptual lens, count either as 'political' or merely as part of the everyday operations of politics (which Rancière refers to as 'the police'), depending on

³⁶ It is important to note that these arguments are mainly formulated within the realm of constitutive democracies and thus cannot be relegated to a purely structural discussion in which tiny social gatherings would be defined as either associative or dissociative in nature.

whether it disrupts 'the distribution of the sensible' or leaves it unchanged. What Rancière calls an 'intervention into the visible and sayable' is therefore postulated as the ultimate criteria for political actions proper (*la politique*). After *la politique* has disrupted the normal functioning of the 'politicians politics' the latter cannot proceed with the same self-evidence as before. Whereas Laclau and Mouffe argue for a taming of political adversity to set the basis for a democratic debate, for Rancière political conflict cannot be solved as easily by the conflict parties because the commonality between both first needs to be created by the people, the *dêmos*. Accordingly, the essential question for Rancière's political philosophy is *who are the people, who counts and can be part of a political community*. The notion of democracy thus becomes almost identical with that of the political, and thus appears in a wider sense than its conventional meaning (Bedorf 2016, 26). Due to its focus on the essential political question of who constitutes a political community, as well as its sensibility for the political dimension of literary and artistic work, Rancière's conception of the political warrants to be revisited at greater detail in the following section (1.2.2.).

In closing, it is again important to note that the main concern of the conceptual differentiations between politics and the political, as discussed here, is not one of analytical accuracy. It is instead itself distinctively *politically* motivated. Whether in the normative, hegemonic or disruptive interpretations of the political, the canonical authors in the field of political theory cited here all share *a commitment to re-imagining contemporary forms of progressive politics*, by naming or making visible what they consider to be 'truly political' actions. As this study will show, Glissant at times entertained similar distinctions in the few dispersed comments he made with regards to his conception of the political. While the larger theoretical debate around the 'political difference' (Marchart) allows me to formulate Glissant's conception of the political as a subsidiary interest of my thesis, a closer engagement with the relationship between literature and politics, between poetics and the political in his work is required in order for a more thorough appreciation of the actual political practice Glissant associated with these abstract thoughts. Revisiting the political philosophy of Rancière more closely promises to be a productive step in this direction.

1.2.2. Jacques Rancière's Sensibility for the 'Distribution of the Sensible' and the Politics of Literature

In an ordinary sense, as well as in most of the theoretical strands outlined above, literature and politics denote two very different areas of social life. In cases when the two are perceived as sharing something in common, or when individual writers are politically engaged, this is conventionally considered under the heading of 'political literature'. This literature is often-times conceived in terms of political analysis, commentaries on empiric political events or even as propaganda. In these

instances, literature is thus seen as political if it directly engages with the 'political system' or the constellation of powers in a society, be it in a supportive or oppositional manner. In the terms presented in the previous sub-section, underlying this understanding of political literature is thus a conception of politics that I have referred to as state-centric or power-focussed in the previous sections (1.2.1).

In a historical context, this prevalent conception can be contrasted to how the relationship between literature and politics has been interpreted historically. In Europe, particularly since the Russian revolution and the rise of Marxist ideology, literature was often seen as revolutionary and as a direct expression of particular class interests (Maguire 2013, 98-99). For several generations in Anglophone and Francophone literature working within this tradition, the nexus between literature and politics was an obvious one and necessitated literary analysis through the grid of the ideological, social, cultural and political 'location of literature' (96). In the French literary context, Sartre's notion of the *écrivain engagé*, formulated in his essay *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (1947), exercised a great influence on several generations of writers, literary scholars and commentators (see 1.3.1.) and can be placed in this larger discursive context.

Another important intervention in this debate were arguments advanced by feminist critics, to consider the 'private sphere' or the personal, as something deserving political analysis in its own right. Literary production and reading as 'private activities', but more importantly as a medium in which the private lives of those who were rendered invisible in the conventional political realm were being represented, could thus be turned into the object of political studies. This claim not only criticised or supplemented a classist perspective on literature as demanded by Marxists, it also, more fundamentally, went against the separation of the private and public realms in Western political thought that can be traced back to the separations of the *oikos* and *polis* in ancient Greece. Despite the protests of several political scientists, who considered this move to potentially 'trivialise' their object of study, leading to an oversight of the material conditions that define the gravity of political matters (Liang 2013, 18), the view that personal relationships are reflected by greater power structures, and that personal relationships can influence them as well, receives wider acknowledgment today, but is still largely excluded from mainstream political theoretical discussions.

Following on from these debates, in a chronological sense, the tradition of poststructuralism has taken up and re-defined several of these concerns about the political nature of literature from the 1960s onwards, by conceiving power no longer exclusively as being tied to specific institutions but as 'everywhere', as implied by Michel Foucault's 'microphysics of power' (2010). Among its proponents, the work of Rancière has in recent years received growing attention as standing for a

line of thought that distances itself both from classical Marxist analysis, and is invested in developing a theory of the political in tune with the entanglements of literary production and politics. To reiterate Rancière's position in the context of the debate outlined above, Rancière reaffirms this conceptual opposition by calling 'false politics' the 'politics of politicians' or the 'police', and by calling 'true politics' the politics of literature or 'the political'. Rancière could thus be seen as proceeding from the differentiation outlined above and as elaborating a kind of 'true political' practice that can be developed in distinction from, and in opposition to, a conventional understanding of politics.

Rancière's Political Philosophy – Disagreements and the Rarity of True Politics

Apart from the general *disruptive* and *dissociative* characteristics mentioned above (1.2.1.), Jacques Rancière's political philosophy warrants to be revisited at the onset of this thesis for two reasons. The first one concerns Rancière's particular understanding of political action as an intervention into the 'distribution of the sensible' revealing the *dissensus* between those who are part of and those who are excluded from a political community. The second, and closely related aspect, pertains to his arguments concerning the politics of literature. This sub-section presents these two ideas, the former being mainly contained in his book *La Méésentente – Politique et Philosophie* (*Disagreement*, 1999), the latter in his essay *La politique de la littérature* (*Politics of Literature*, 2011).

Referring back to debates in ancient Greece, Rancière proposes to differentiate between the politics of politicians and the politics of philosophers – which I perceive to be connected to the poet's politics in the context of this thesis (1.1.). For the former he reserves the term police,³⁷ for the latter the term politics. Like Aristotle, Rancière defines politics through its essential connection to equality as:

“that activity which turns on equality as its principle. And the principle of equality is transformed by the distribution of community shares as defined by a quandary: when is there and when is there not equality in things between who and who else? What are these 'things' and who are these whos? How does equality come to consist of equality and inequality?” (Rancière 1999, ix).

To repeat the main claim introduced earlier, the dissensus or disagreement which signals the appearance of a properly political event for Rancière concerns an argument about who counts as an equal part of a society, and whose very existence, and by consequence whose equality, is being disavowed by a particular political order. For Rancière each political order is constituted by a particular distribution of the sensible, of that which can be seen and said. Whereas the work of 'the

³⁷ Police is defined as: “an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise” (Rancière 1999, 29).

police' is dedicated to the maintenance of this particular order, true 'politics', brings about a rupture in the order of the police, a rupture created when those without a part in society claims a part and a re-ordering of the realm of the sensible (Marchart 2010, 179). True political action (*la politique*) – as opposed to 'the police' – for Rancière thus always predicates a certain division of society, a disagreement, and a moment in which this division becomes visible: “*The essence* of politics is the manifestation of dissensus, as the presence of two worlds in one” (Ranciere 2001, thesis 8). In these moments, the 'order of the ruling class' is interrupted and a new equality is brought about on which a new society, an actual democracy can be based. In a formulation that risks sounding cryptic, Rancière defines the dissensus or disagreement at the basis of the political in the following terms: “The structures proper to disagreement are those in which discussion of an argument comes down to a dispute over the object of the discussion and over the capacity of those who are making an object of it” (1999, xii). To demonstrate this argument, and as a fitting example in this context, Rancière refers among others to the figure of the slave, as the historical figure who possesses the possibility to understand (*logos*), but was socially not considered to possess a *logos*: “The slave is the one who has the capacity to understand a *logos* without having the capacity of the *logos*. He is the specific transition from animality to humanity that Aristotle defines most precisely as participating in the linguistic community by way of comprehension but not understanding” (17). In a colonial or plantation setting, the slave understands the masters language but is categorically excluded from the (political) conversation. His speech remains invisible, her rationality remains an impossibility to the master whose subject position is defined exclusively on the basis of his sense of human superiority. When Rancière thus writes about the class struggle that it is not only the secret driving engine of politics or the truth behind it, that *it is politics itself* (30), the same could be said about the decolonial struggle or the struggle for black liberation.

Although Rancière does not emphasise this himself, the existence of 'two worlds within one', the disavowal of the rationality, of the language of the colonised as equally as civilised, is perhaps no where clearer than in a colonial settings. Only once *those who do not have the right to belong*, or who are *not considered as fully human* claim to belong, claim to be fully human, does the clash of these two worlds bring about a political moment in Rancière's view (38). His conception of the political is thus particularly appealing for scholars studying colonial history and traditions of anticolonial resistance. Rancière's conviction that “Politics is not made up of power relationships; it is made up of relationships between worlds” (42) implies that political conflicts are, above all, conflicts between different world-views, a formulation reminiscent of Glissant's emphasis on different imaginaries of the world stated at the onset of this introduction (1.1.). The political moment begins with the acknowledgment that there is more than one world 'out there'. Although

Glissant did not enter into a direct philosophic conversation with Rancière,³⁸ several passages and formulations in Glissant's work can be read as anticipating Rancière's theoretical formulations in *Disagreement*. One could, for instance, point to Glissant's view that the era of decolonisations in the late 1950s signalled the moment where the 'hidden countries of the world became visible' (IP 14),³⁹ a decisive moment for the emergence of what he called the *Tout-Monde*, and a challenge to the dominant conception of Western civilisation.⁴⁰

Rancière's insistence that notions such as sensibility, speech and visibility are central to the understanding of political conflicts have made his writing of particular interest in art and literary circles. In another definition of politics he, for example, writes about these moments when the 'order of the sensible breaks' (1999, 41): "Political activity is whatever shifts a body from the place assigned to it or changes a place's destination. It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise" (30). Translating the claim of the *sans-parts* from the realm of political activism to the realm of theatre, he for instance writes that, "Politics is primarily conflict over the existence of a common stage and over the existence and status of those present on it" (26-27). Creating a common stage, placing particular characters on stage, defining common characteristics among them, deciding who gets to speak and how are central issues of cultural and literary production. Responding to them does not require the mobilisation of millions of demonstrators, but can, at the most basic level, be settled with pen and paper.

Political By Definition – Rancière's Politics of Literature

Rancière's privileging of the realm of perception in his conception of politics also has specific implications for what he calls the 'politics of literature', and thus for my engagement with Glissant's literary practice. In his essay *Politics of Literature* (2011), Rancière claims that the politics of literature needs to be differentiated from the allegiances of writers to particular ideologies or organisations, their own extra-textual or activist engagements or opinions, as well as from the way they represent specific political movements or events in their texts, as would have been the case for an *écrivain engagé* in the Sartrean sense (3). Based on the above mentioned definition of politics as the "construction of a specific sphere of experience in which certain objects are posited as shared and certain subjects regarded as capable of designating these objects and of

38 François Noudelmann reports a meeting between Glissant and Rancière in Tokyo in the mid 1990s (2018, 323).

39 The original formulation reads: "*Le monde soudain s'est trouvé large de ces pays qui hier encore s'épaississaient dans la nuit*" Glissant repeated this notion in *Le discours antillais*, where he wrote that the people on the "hidden side of earth fought against History and Literature as much as they fought for food and freedom" (CD 76).

40 In his conceptualisation of the 'decolonial option', Walter D. Mignolo has made a similar argument with regards to the 'properly political moment'. Mignolo writes that "From a decolonial perspective something similar [...] 'the political proper' shall not be found in ancient Greece, but in the Atlantic from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth: this is where indigenous leaders and runaway slaves initiated a series of actions and thoughts in which 'the decolonial political proper' was historically founded" (2011, 244).

arguing about them” (3), Rancière proceeds to make the case that the specific political value of literature is that it “intervenes in the carving up of space and time, the visible and the invisible, speech and noise” (4), thus playing an active role in forming the 'distribution of the perceptible', which he defines as “the distribution and redistribution of space and time, place and identity, speech and noise, the visible and the invisible” (4). Beyond the expansion of the distribution of the perceptible to include human beings that have been rendered invisibilised by the dominant imagination of the world, this expansion could also be stretched further to consider non-human or natural beings as political actors – an aspect that is taken up in Glissant's work and in the field of Indigenous studies more generally.

Making a case against a political study of literature that solely focusses on the biography of an author, Rancière insists that “literature does politics simply by being literature“, which means for him that by 'making all words equal' literature actively destroys the order between “worthy subjects and unworthy subjects, man and things” (11). This literary revolution needs to be seen as a properly political act for Rancière. It is properly political in the sense that it destroyed the previously existing social hierarchies and sense of time, and made space for a radical equality or what Rancière calls 'literary democracy' (10). For Rancière, the democratic essence of his understanding of literature – as opposed to classical speeches addressed to kings and princesses – can be attributed to the fact that the written word can be created by anyone and read by anyone (12). In one of his formulations, he speaks of the sentences in a novel as 'mute stones' that can be picked up by anyone (12), a metaphor Rancière also directly associates with the thesis that 'stones speak' more reliably than humans, through the discipline of archaeology for example (14). Although Rancière's literary democracy posits the absence of a clear boundary between art and ordinary life, the two realms should not be confused as identical. In Rancière's political philosophy literary language is characterised by its capacity to produce a different sensorium, a different world and a different people, and is thus clearly delineated from everyday discourse (14). Literature then, not only *mirrors* or *studies* society, but is political in the sense that it *creates* new mythologies on the basis of which new communities can be created (20). Again bearing strong overlaps with Glissant's interpretation of the function of literature Rancière insists that what counts is *what kind of people, what kind of 'community of the living and the dead' the logic of the novel puts forward* (20) (see 4.3.2.).

In sum, Rancière's view on the politics of literature is defined by its ability to collapse old hierarchies of high and low and to create a kind of 'metapolitics' in which an inclusive 'true stage' is created as a foundation on which an actual political practice could be developed (21). For Rancière, a true political practice is defined by the way it ruptures what is thinkable and sayable. In that sense

it is always a process and cannot be institutionalised. As soon as any social order is being created or fixed, this truly political moment would 'freeze' and become invested in the maintenance of a particular hierarchy, a 'police', which would have to be ruptured once again in order for a truly political moment to arise.

As will become apparent throughout this thesis, Rancière's understanding of the political and specifically of the politics of literature, will reappear at several points to identify some of the aspects of Glissant's work as political, that have so far not been considered as such. In that sense, Rancière's work presents a welcome opening up of the field of politics for literary and artistic work more generally. It frees politically oriented literary studies, and my own perspective on the political dimensions of Glissant's work, from an exclusive focus on the *biography* of the author and of questions of *representation* of political events in his work. It also frees political studies from an exclusive focus on conventional political phenomena. Instead it places a greater emphasis on how the perceptions, the world-views, or what Glissant would call imaginaries, of people are constituted and can be changed. In the context of this thesis, it thus presents a challenge to not 'only' read Glissant's political allegiances, his theorising of political events and his depiction of these events, but to pay more sustained attention to what I have referred to as the 'politics of aesthetics'.

In addition to these openings, there are also a set of blind spots that mainly result from Rancière's categorical approach to the truly political (*la politique*) and the police (the politician's politics) I would like to signal. One could, for example, point out that by proposing a binary opposition between 'good' and 'bad', between 'true' and 'false' political action, Rancière's theory of politics is not able to capture the complex entanglements and shades of grey among political practices that work in between or across the conceptual divisions between a radical rupture and modifications of the distribution of the sensible. Another aspect concerns Rancière's celebration of literary democracy, or the argument that literature is *by nature* political and that poetics and politics are identical (2011, 20). Justified by the essential egalitarian thrust of literary practice, Rancière's notion of political runs the risk of remaining on the textual level or on the plane of the page, effectively leaving out *the relationship between the politics of literature and the realm of politics*, or what Rancière calls the police. As I will argue in the following section, conceptions of the political underlying the black radical tradition have from the onset acknowledged the importance of operating with less categorical or exclusionary conceptions of the political and have taken both realms, the visible realm of the police and the less visible realm of cultural production, seriously in their struggle for decolonial liberation.

1.2.3. Beyond the Boundary – The Black Radical Tradition's Perception of Politics and Culture

Having moved from political theoretical debates that are relatively distant from Glissant's own preoccupations to considerations concerning the tradition within which his literary practice evolved more directly, this section shifts my discussion on the relations between politics, the political and literature, which has so far been marked by a Eurocentric bias, towards an engagement with a tradition I consider Glissant's work to be more closely aligned with, which I will broadly refer to as a black radical tradition.

Anthony Bogues has conceptualised the black radical tradition in his book *Black Heretics, Black Prophets – Radical Political Intellectuals* (2003)⁴¹ where he makes the case for a different conceptualisation of the work of black intellectuals, outside the confines of established frameworks for intellectual work, such as the ones drawing Antonio Gramsci's differentiation between organic and traditional intellectuals, or Isaiah Berlin's work on the Russian intelligentsia (5-6). Beginning from the observation of shared concerns among black radical thinkers like CLR James, Frantz Fanon, Malcolm X and James Baldwin stemming from the shared experience of being haunted by the “legacies of being a racial-slave-colonial object”, Bogues argues that they share a mutual struggle in which they “wrestle with language, consciousness, the nature of the ordinary, and the meaning of Africa to their life and work” (5). Instead of reproducing the normative standards of Western modernity, black radical intellectuals produce a critique or counter-discourse about it (9). Bogues proposes to differentiate between two main streams of black radical intellectual production, a 'heretic stream' (10), that challenges orthodoxy but is highly educated and working within the Western system, and a 'redemptive prophetic stream' that is, in a sense, the 'antithesis' of Western-educated intellectuals: “Rooted in the subsoil of the African diaspora in the West in the period of the early modernity these persons [...] developed paradigmatic models of reasoning that were in sharp epistemological conflict with the heretic stream” (16).⁴² While this differentiation is interesting in so far as Glissant does not fall neatly into either of these streams, and can perhaps be considered as occupying an in-between position through his emphasis on the politics of poetics that distanced him from the counter-discursive practice of the heretics, I consider the common link between these two strands as being of even greater importance for my study.

Against the background of the view that Western political philosophy never fully recovered from the opposition of private and public, of the difference between thought and practice (2003,

41 The notion of the black radical tradition was first coined by Cedric J. Robinson in *Black Marxism – The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (2000).

42 Bogues groups figures like CLR James, Anna Julia Cooper, Richard Wright, WEB Du Bois, Walter Rodney and Ida B. Wells as representative of the heretic stream and Boukman in Haiti and Gullah Jack in South Carolina as belonging to the prophetic stream.

20), Bogue claims that the common ground between the two traditions of black radical intellectuals lies in the “deep political practice in Africana political thought that connects the lived social and political experiences of Africans and the African diaspora to the categories of political thought” (21). In other words, intellectuals like C.L.R James, Malcolm X or Marcus Garvey all shared a practice in which the boundary between political thought and political action collapsed (21):

“They were radical intellectuals who developed new political knowledge from a dialectical dialogue of lived experience and critical interpretation. This is a feature of the black radical intellectual tradition, where there is a radical hermeneutic of everyday experiences. Of such importance is this practice that it suggests to us a rethinking of the formulations about the relationships between political thought and political practice” (21).

As a way of further substantiating the argument that this combination of thought and practice, of crossing the boundaries of the private and the public realm, are also integral elements of Glissant's conception of political literary practice, and that his work could thus be considered as belonging to the black radical traditions discussed by Bogue, I will in the following present his stance to postmodern theorisations on literature and then proceed to an overview of the influence the Afro-Caribbean literary tradition can be considered to have had on Glissant's work.

'From a Little Distance' – Glissant's Perspective on Postmodern Theory

Although, as I have mentioned above, Glissant did not engage in political theoretical conversations, with some of the French authors cited above, who were not only his contemporaries but also lived and worked in Paris and circulated in the French intellectual scene at around the same time, his stance on postmodernist concerns can be deduced from dispersed passages in his work. In *Le discours antillais*, which was published in 1981, Glissant wrote the following with regards to this traditions' preoccupation with 'deconstruction' and 'discourse analysis', and more specifically with regards to Roland Barthes' claims in *The Death of the Author* (1967):

“When I witness from a little distance the very interesting work being done on a theoretical level in the West, it seems to me that two reactions are formed: I experience at the same time a feeling of the ridiculous and a feeling of the extreme importance of these ideas. For instance, on the subject of the destabilizing of the text and 'its' author. [...] If I say that it seems ridiculous to me, it is because (in our lived modernity) these issues have no bearing on us. We need to develop a poetics of the 'subject,' if only because we have been too long 'objectified' or rather 'objected to.' And if I say that this seems important to me, it is because these queries relate to our deepest preoccupations. The text must for us (in our lived experience) be destabilized, because it must belong to a shared reality, and it is perhaps at this point that we actually relate to these ideas that have emerged elsewhere. The author must be demythified, certainly, because he must be integrated into a common resolve. The collective 'We' becomes the site of the generative system, and the true subject. Our critique of the act and the idea of literary creation is not derived from a 'reaction' to theories which are proposed to us, but from a burning need for *modification*” (CD 148-49).

Read against the background of the debate on the conceptual difference between politics and the political (1.2.1.) and the politics of literature (1.2.2.), this passage takes on an added significance when it is extended outside literary concerns with the 'destabilisation of the author and the text'. Glissant clearly distanced himself from a Western perspective, by repeatedly evoking a collective 'us' – alluding to the formerly colonised or Non-Western people on the 'darker side of modernity' (Mignolo 2011) –, to whom he attributes a radically different lived experience than those of his contemporary French 'postmodern' writers. Although he agreed, in principle, with the importance of the deconstructive gesture towards the mythical status of the text and its author – which in the context of political studies could be replaced by the focus on state power – Glissant's unease with these concerns is that, for the community Glissant identified with, there never was a founding text, or a mythical author figure to begin with. At the very core of the colonial project was the denial of the very possibility of a subjectivity of the colonised, of black subjectivity and of the establishment of a black nation-state. These concepts, similar to those of the political community, first had to be created through active and often-times armed resistance. The 'burning need for modification', which in the French original is formulated as the “*nécessité fulgurante* d'intervention” (LDA 259), thus points to the urgency to, first of all, call this text, this subject, this state, this community into existence.

Analogously, one could argue that the conceptual difference between politics and the political in colonial and postcolonial contexts is less of an abstract theoretical concern, than it is a matter of life and death, of resisting to or being assimilated to the colonial project. Put more clearly, the lived experience and the historical background against which Glissant produced his work was fundamentally different than the one from which political theories of politics or the political, as outlined in the previous two sub-sections, were developed.⁴³ On an abstract level, this forces the triangular relationship between politics, science and the political back into the picture where theories of the political have to be considered as expressions and reflections of specific political orders.⁴⁴ Instead of taking up a perspective *from the state*, such as is most prominently the case with a Machiavellian notion of politics, or *for a liberal state*, as is the case with Arendt's conception of the political, or communicative rationalism à la Habermas, from a post-slavery, post-colonial perspective *there was no state, no political community that could be improved, saved, or assumed as self-evident and unproblematic*. Neither was there an established public space where a rational debate between former colonisers and colonised could take place, when the very subject position of

43 In his reading of the same passage Shilliam notes, “Glissant challenges the spatial and temporal grounding of ethical inquiry within the European-modern. He shifts these grounds from the solid citizenship of European-continental soil to the tides and turbulence of the Caribbean archipelago” (2011, 659).

44 Walter Mignolo and Madina V. Tlostanova have coined the notion of the 'geo- and body-politics of knowledge' for this notion in the context of decolonial theory (2006).

the one was predicated on the dehumanisation of the other. Where the cultural values and political processes of the state were first of all colonial in nature, thus alien and destructive, *everything has to be re-invented*. In other words, the realisation that the official politics of the government are not the only forms of political activity possible, that there are other forms of politics, specifically in the realm of the arts that matter, is *at the very basis* of the experience of the colonised. What proponents of poststructuralism worked out from the 1960s onwards – and in the French case arguably mainly against the historical backdrop of the Algerian war of liberation –, *was known and felt from the perspective of the colonised, all along*. Hence the mixed reaction of Glissant to their 'catching up' to the Non-West, as which I interpret the above quote.

The question thus becomes: *What does it mean to think about politics, the political and literary activity from a postcolonial context? And more specifically from a French Caribbean context?* An important point of departure in response to this question is that, since colonialism was conceptualised as *a total project*, in which the political, social, economic and cultural spheres all worked towards the same goal – the exploitation of the resources of the colonised along with the eradication of their cultures and histories with the aim of turning them from humans into objects –, *every action that defied this project was in itself a political act*. In that context, the practice of writing, story-telling and song, thus took on particular significance.

The Politics of Literature in the Afro-Caribbean Postcolonial Tradition

In response to a strong current of interpretation of Glissant's work which focusses on the cosmopolitan thrust of his oeuvre, it is important to re-emphasise the entanglements of his philosophy in the colonial Caribbean context and its general decolonial thrust, an issue to which I will return in section (1.4.). Because it effectively undermined the colonial myth of the 'ignorant' or 'irrational savage', writing in this context was a criminal offence for those subjected to slavery and colonisation throughout large parts of the 19th century. In the absence of official avenues for political contestation, the realms of language, music and writing became prime sites for anticolonial political action. As Frederic Douglass, asserted in this vein, “the will to power became the will to write” (quoted in Anderson 1995, 16).

Growing up and being educated in Martinique, Glissant was significantly influenced by the work of Aimé Césaire, who had begun to pave a way for young Antillean writers in the early 1940s and has been credited for establishing a foundation for a Martinican literature to exist by subsequent generations. Césaire, together with Léopold Sédar Senghor, later became one of the central proponents of the Négritude movement, which in their writings placed a particular emphasis on the need to vindicate African cultural values that were systematically devalued by the French colonial and postcolonial administration (Vèrges and Césaire 2005, 37).

Through their exchanges with militants in the African liberation struggle in colonial metropolises like Paris and London, and in associations like the *Société Africaine de Culture* (SAC) and the conferences it organised, a generation of radical Caribbean intellectuals was raised in the belief that cultural work formed an integral part of the anticolonial struggle, and following the official independences in the 1960s, part of the struggle against neocolonialism. On an official level this became particularly apparent when poets and intellectuals occupied leading positions in the administration of their independent nations. While Césaire was elected mayor of Martinique and deputy to the French assembly, several of his companions occupied posts as presidents of their independent nation-states, such as Senghor in Senegal, or Agostinho Neto in Angola. The literary activities of this anti-colonial generation was heavily invested in the production of 'counter-history' of the cultural legacies of their nations. As Chinua Achebe acknowledges, in its struggle to establish African literature from the ground up, his generation was engaged in writing back to Empire and thus in 'the politics of representation' (2012, 55). This overt political commitment is, of course, at odds with the view on literature's inherent political charge, as proposed by Rancière above. Instead it insists on the importance for writers to directly intervene in colonial discourses and institutions on textual and non-textual levels. The tension with postmodern approaches to a 'literary democracy' (Rancière), is evident when writers like Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo⁴⁵ stressed the rootedness of literary practices in oral African cultures where art and the community are intimately linked together (56). This connection, here expressed in the words of Achebe, persisted in the way many Caribbean intellectual perceived their own work:

“African art as we understand it has not been distilled or purified and refined to the point where it has lost all traces of real life, lost the vitality of the street, like art from some advanced societies and academic art tend to be. In Africa the tendency is to keep art involved with the people. It is clearly emphasised among my own Igbo people that art must never be allowed to escape into the rarefied atmosphere but must remain activist in the lives of the members of society” (56).

The moral obligation, that literature should take the side of the oppressed against the oppressors, to which Achebe subscribed,⁴⁶ and that cultural work cannot be dissociated from political work has been at the very basis of the work of several generations of Afro-Caribbean writers. At times this view is expressed quite generally, such as in Aimé Césaire's evocation that “*La politique ne mériterait pas une parcelle d'énergie si elle n'était justifiée par un projet culturel*”⁴⁷. At other times it took the form of intense collaborations between writers and politicians,

45 In his book *Writers in Politics* (1981), Thiongo argued that the aim of literary production should be, “to change a people's world outlook, it is to seize back the right and the initiative to define oneself” as a necessary corollary to economic and political liberation struggle (29).

46 Achebe famously stated that “It's not a question of whether or not there is commitment. It's a question of on whose side ... As a writer, all that you can do it ask yourself, 'Am I going to be on the side of the oppressor or on the side of the oppressed’” (cited in Julien et al. 1986, 1).

47 “politics does not warrant the least bit of energy as long as it is not justified by a cultural project”, my translation. The slogan has

like the engagement of the Barbadian novelist George Lamming during the Grenada Revolution (2.3.1.), which Lamming explained by asserting that, for the politician to develop a vision for a society he or she requires the collective support from “from the historian, the poet, the student of philosophy and the social sciences, the economist and the theatre director who recreates the cultural history of the nation” (2004, 15-16). Against a view that perceives culture as the 'icing on the cake' after social and economic issues have been resolved, he argues that 'culture is the very cake you are making'. In this vein, Lamming recalls the period of the 1950s and 1960s as a time when Caribbean writers and artists of his generation were under the impression that they were 'actually creating something new' and had a sustained impact on the political vision of their societies (2002, 161-62).

In this tradition, literature is thus not only tasked with *representing* or *explaining* the world, but with effectively *changing* it (Thiongo 1981, 75). According to several authors in this tradition, the writer has a social obligation to educate his or her readers and to actively participate in the project of nation-building.⁴⁸ In these works, the author undertakes more than write allegories of the nation – to take up Jameson's famous hypothesis about Third World literature –, they are *actively engaged in constructing them in their literature as well as in 'real life'*. A central trait of Afro-Caribbean literature and its entanglement in postcolonial politics thus has to be seen in the fact that its most renown representatives were committed to specific nation-building projects through their literary activities and other forms of extra-textual activism. They shared a commitment to a revalorisation of the cultural values of their respective communities, a revalorisation that was formulated primarily in opposition to the efforts of colonial powers to maintain in control of their respective 'spheres of influence'. This general direction has also been noted as a critique against Négritude project by several generations of intellectuals, including Cheikh Anta Diop, Frantz Fanon and Glissant himself. More could be said about this rich archive of political thought and the complex positions and differences within it. For the purpose of this study, it is of greater interest, however, how Glissant positioned himself and can be placed within this tradition. To be sure, his literary trajectory was marked by ongoing changes in the geopolitical landscape over half a century. It is however appropriate to consider the decolonial moment as a formative period for his own perception of his position as a *political writer*, a claim that Glissant himself acknowledged when he said that his engagement with the *Société Africaine de Culture* and *Présence Africaine* in the late 1950s was of fundamental importance for his political activity.⁴⁹

been written on a street mural in Fort-de-France next to a portrait of Césaire.

48 See Chinua Achebe's *The Novelist as a Teacher* (1965).

49 In the same interview he said: “*Je n'ai jamais été convaincu par les théories de la négritude. Par contre, je l'étais par le travail de la Société Africaine de Culture, qui consistait à ramasser tout ce qu'il y avait comme richesse dans la société africaine et dans la culture de la diaspora africaine*” (I was never convinced by the Négritude theories, but I was convinced of the work done by the Société Africaine de Culture, which consisted of collecting everything that was valuable about African society and its diasporic culture) and later, “*La période de Présence Africaine est celle qui a initié mon activité politique*” (The time of Présence Africaine initiated by political activity) (Couffon and Glissant 34, 36).

The Poet's Position in the Struggle – Marginal and Central

The earliest formulations of Glissant's own understanding of the political role he considered himself to be exercising as a writer, and poets more generally, date to his earliest writings as part of the youth group *Franc Jeu* and his speeches at the founding congress of the *Front des Antillais et Guyanais pour l'Autonomie* (FAGA) in 1961. Glissant would revisit this issue at several points in his writing, especially in *Le discours antillais* (1981) and in the *Manifeste pour les 'produits' de haute nécessité* (2009). A common theme across these pronouncements is that Glissant insisted that, as part of a larger decolonial struggle, the role of the poet has to be a peripheral one, one of providing ideas, of proposing a vision, of sketching out possible routes to take. For a radical political project of transformation to take effect it would have to be taken up by 'the people at large', it would have to find an echo in the collective imaginary and, as such, could not be orchestrated or lead by an elite. In his speech at the FAGA conference Glissant spells this out in greater detail:

*“Nous avons dit et répété que nous ne sommes pas un Comité révolutionnaire qui veut de Paris diriger la révolution aux Antilles. Personne ne nous a donné délégation pour diriger une révolution. Sur la base d'idées que nous croyons justes, nous voulons donner l'impulsion à un Front Commun des Antillais et Guyanais”*⁵⁰ (LAGHD 74).

He continued this line of argument by saying:

*“ce n'est pas nous qui devons décider des formes de lutte, car une fois de plus, nous ne sommes pas des prophètes: nous prenons position sur des idées et questions théorétiques que nous essayons de mettre en pratique. Nous n'essayons pas de prévoir l'avenir [...] Nous avons dit que nous nous battions pour que l'idée de fédération qui nous semble juste soit portée à la connaissance de nos peuples. Nous n'avons jamais dit que nous allions la faire nous-mêmes”*⁵¹ (LAGHD 74-75).

In Glissant's view, the poet's task was therefore not to practically lead a movement of resistance or organising large scale demonstrations or movements 'in the streets', an image attached to Sartre and the committed writer. Glissant allocated a more *humble, additional, or tutelary* role to the poet's political practice. Humble both in the sense that it can not possibly replace actual (humanitarian) action but also in that it refuses to dictate. This relativisation and important contextualisation of the poet's politics is, not meant to downplay its significance. Quite the contrary, despite its marginality, Glissant argued that the poet's work is of vital importance to *balance the prosaic dimension of life by a poetic dimension*, an argument that is most fully articulated in the *Manifeste pour les 'produits' de haute nécessité* (2009) (4.1.2.). The arguments put forward in the *Manifeste* point out that, from a Glissantian perspective, the poet's vision has an important role to

50 “We have said and repeated that we are not a revolutionary committee that tries to spark a revolution in the Antilles from Paris. No one has delegated the right to us to lead a revolution. On the basis of ideas that we believe to be just we want to give an impulse to a Common Front of Antilleans and Guyanese”, my translation.

51 “we do not have to decide upon the forms of struggle, because once more, we are not prophets: we take a position based on our ideas and theoretical questions that we try to put into practice. We do not try to foresee the future [...] We have said that we are battling for the idea of a federation that we think warrants to be brought to the attention of our people. We have never said that we will do it ourselves”, my translation.

play in moments of political emergency, so that a political movement does not lose sight of its worldly dimension and the root causes underlying a particular political grievance.

Important to add to the *peripheral* or adjacent position of the poet in political struggles, is the *central role* the poet occupies in the literary realm. In this context, Glissant worked to strengthen the position of his work and those of his associates through the creation and maintenance of literary networks, such as the *Institut du Tout-Monde*, the *International Parliament of Writers* and the *UNESCO Courier*, which have been mentioned in 1.1. (see chapter 4). Forming part of the same struggle, this longer, less visible kind of work operates according to a slower rhythm and is somewhat free from the imperative of urgency and effectiveness that mark conventional political affairs. Because of these circumstances, the poet's politics can aspire to be a wholistic practice in which the smallest and the largest elements do not have to be divorced from one another. This does not mean that, as will become apparent throughout this thesis, it is without contradictions or unwilling to compromise, but that it takes seriously the full scale of political effects, from the political implications of a particular style of writing, on one end, to the expressed support of specific political movements on the other end.

A closely related characteristic for a political writer in Glissant's view is that he does not separate culture and politics. In his unpublished *Notes pour un traité de la décolonisation* (1961) he noted that the '*homme du culture*' has to be an active element in political life, as much as the '*homme politique*' should consider the political life as a '*données de la vie culturelle*'.⁵² In this vein, Glissant underlined that “the black intellectual does not separate between culture and politics“, and a little later, “the people (we are interested in) do not separate politics and culture“. He justified this view by arguing that “*la vie politique était séculairement un leurre d'abord faux-semblant ensuite copie*” and that “*Parce que la vie politique participait de la dépersonnalisation et de la négation des cultures nationales.*“⁵³ In these formulations, the notion of a secular political life, a separate social realm, is identified as a 'trick' to be unmasked. While it presents itself as not involved in cultural or spiritual affairs, official politics is actively involved in destroying cultures and individual and collective subjectivities in the name of colonialism and its alleged 'civilising mission'.

What is apparent in these statements and the larger intellectual context in which they were formulated, is that Glissant did not entertain a categorical differentiation between an *official* politics and *real* political action as introduced in 1.2.1. or as elaborated by Rancière in terms of the opposition between the political and the police in 1.2.2. In line with the black radical tradition more generally, Glissant considered both realms to be important. In his own writing practice Glissant,

52 The following references refer to the manuscript pages *Notes pour un traité de la décolonisation* (1961, no page numbers), consulted at the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* in July 2017.

53 “The notion of a secular political life is at first a false pretence and then becomes a copy”, “Because political life participates in the depersonalisation and the negation of national cultures”, my translation.

accordingly, at times referred to *une politique* (a politics) to denote a specific set of policies, and at other times to *le politique* as a more idealised form of politics, such as in the following passage:

“Le politique se renforce de la vision directe et de l'imaginaire du monde, et rassure ses action en convenant à la fois à ces deux poétiques, lesquelles renvoient à la totalité non totalitaire (pas d'internationalisme des idéologies), et à une appartenance à des lieux (pays et peuples) préservés à la fois de l'entournement et de la faiblesse mimétique”⁵⁴ (PHR 86).

Glissant thus effectively transcended the categorical opposition between more 'prosaic' forms of institutionalised political practices (Rancière's police) and the 'poetic' practice of literary politics or true political action. It is in this sense that I consider the conception of Glissant's politics of relation to point towards a transcendence of the oppositions introduced by traditional and postmodern conceptions of the political.

Section Summary

In addition to the 'postmodern' elements of Glissant's literary practice, to which I have alluded in my rendition of Rancière's arguments around the politics of literature, Glissant's intimate entanglements with the black literary tradition, whose complexity this general overview does not want to disavow, is important to note at the onset of this study. This positioning shatters the division between literature as a 'world of letters' and the material conditions of the 'real world'. It explicitly takes responsibility to transform the material circumstances of peoples subjected to colonialism. In this tradition, the choice of a particular language, problematised particularly by Thiongo's proposition for African literature to be produced in African languages, and of making particular characters visible or invisible all have *material implications outside of the literary realm*.⁵⁵

With regards to the general overview of the relationship between politics, the political and literature, this tradition thus points into two different directions: From a state-centric or institutional-focussed conception of political literature (*écrivain engagé*), to the sphere of the sensible. And again in the other direction towards an acknowledgement that ideas are embodied, and physically performed, institutionalised and defended outside the text. The literary realm is thus not a world apart but transfuses everyday life, as well as traditional and alternative modes of politics. In terms of the conceptual discussion outlined above, this means that *Glissant's conception of politics is based on an understanding of the political that comprises more overtly visible (traditional politics) as well as more hidden or less visible (literary) forms of political actions – without re-introducing a neat separation between these two*. The decision to not opt for an either/or-

54 “The political gains in strength from the direct vision of the imaginary of the world, and reassures its actions by agreeing to two poetics at once, those that return to the non-totalitarian totality (no internationalisms of ideologies), and to a belonging to certain locations (countries and peoples) guarding itself from the closure and weakness of the mimetic”, my translation.

55 Not least in the sense that several writers were, and still are, actively persecuted for their writings by the state powers they opposed (also see 4.4.2.).

approach but to be susceptible to the validity of a plurality of approaches, is not only closely related to the theoretical approach I pursue in this work, it also anticipates a more general characteristic of Glissant's politics which he expressed in the double-affirmation that he identified in the oeuvre of William Faulkner in the formulation of “not only ... but”, which for Glissant, “broadens the perception of the real until it becomes a sort of whirlwind, relativizing our first idea of reality with a second that spins into vertigo” (FM 205-06). As François Noudelmann argued in the inaugural seminar series of the *Institut du Tout-Monde* in this line of thinking: “The cosmopolitical thought of Glissant is a politics of the relations between all living beings, beyond the juridical or the humanitarian, an unpredictable and multidirectional process. The gap between politics and the political marks a distance, not to retreat or distance oneself, but to think the political otherwise”⁵⁶ (quoted in Lasowski 2015, 51-52).

Having thus specified my field of enquiry of Glissant's politics, from 'traditional' (1.2.1.) to literary-political (1.2.2.) and black literary-political conceptions (1.2.3.), the main question underlying this thesis pertaining to the characteristics of Glissant's politics, can now be addressed. As a way of explaining how my own theoretical approach in this thesis will differ from those pursued in existing scholarship, the following section will provide a comprehensive overview of the secondary literature interested in the political aspects of Glissant's work.

⁵⁶ “*Le pensée cosmopolitique de Glissant, au-delà du juridique ou de l'humanisme, est une politique des relations entre tous les vivants, un mouvement imprédictible et une processus multivers*”, my translation.

1.3. Ways of Reading the Political Dimension of Glissant's Work – The Departmentalisation of the Politics of Relation

“Ce qui manque, justement dans l'étude de la pensée et de l'art de Glissant, c'est bien l'audace de transgresser toutes les frontières, géopolitique, idéologiques, épistémologiques.

Nous devons apprendre à lire autrement, et surtout à partir d'autres lieux”⁵⁷

– Alain Baudot, *Bibliographie annotée d'Édouard Glissant* (1993, xlix)

The following review of scholarship on Glissant's politics is structured in three parts. The first sub-section provides a general overview of how Glissant's oeuvre has been studied in the field of postcolonial literary studies (1.3.1.). The second sub-section lists the aspects of his work that have been identified as being of political importance from this angle (1.3.2.). The third sub-section engages with scholarly approaches that have employed Glissant's work as political theory (1.3.3.). The different conceptions of politics, as discussed in the previous section, will play a pivotal role in this process. They not only enable me to point out aspects of Glissant's oeuvre that have already been discussed as being of political import by other scholar. They, moreover, make it possible to identify areas of his work that risk being occluded by exclusive conceptions of the 'truly political'. Since I will claim that the oversight of specific dimensions of Glissant's political work is in part due to disciplinary biases, a central concern of this section consists of pointing out the potential effects of considering political theoretical debates in literary debates on the politics of writers, as well as taking seriously the politics of literature (Rancière) in the field of political theory. The main argument developed in the course of this review thus holds that, taking into account a broader conception of the politics of literature, as I have discussed it with reference to Rancière (1.2.2.) and the black radical tradition (1.2.3.), will render a more wholistic view of the political strategies Glissant pursued across his life visible.

The Early Reception of Glissant's Work – Négritude Writer or Écrivain Engagé?

In order to place the discussion on the political dimension of Glissant's work in a larger historic context, it is important to note that the early reception of his work in France mainly took place under the influence of the notion of Sartrean committed literature and the culturalist movement of Négritude (Baudot 1993, nr. 669, 759, 762, 829, 830). This time-frame mainly comprises the decades of the 1950s to the 1980s, during which most writings on Glissant were published in newspaper articles. An awareness of this first response to Glissant's work counterbalances a prominent tendency in contemporary studies that date the advent of a critical reception of Glissant's work back to Michael J. Dash's translation in the early 1990s. Although Glissant

⁵⁷ “What is missing in studies of Glissant's art and thought is the audacity to cross all boundaries, geopolitical, ideological and epistemological ones. We have to learn to read differently, and above all from other places”, my translation.

frequented the spaces created by the leaders of the Négritude movement in post-war Paris, such as the *Présence Africaine* journal, the first and second *Congresses of Black Writers and Artists* in Paris in 1956 and in Rome in 1959, as well as the *Société Africaine de Culture*, he expressed his reservations against Négritude's generalising tendency from early on, as stated at the onset of this thesis. Insisting, instead, that he mainly drew inspiration from the white French poet Saint-John Perse, Glissant sought to distance himself from the ideological trajectory set out by Césaire and Senghor (Baudot 1993, nr. 621). Reading his early work, in which nothing suggests a commitment to Négritude theory and its fundamental insistence on black cultural unity or blackness as a basis for political solidarity, confirms this positioning. Relating this first set of engagements with Glissant's work back to the previous section, it becomes clear that while Glissant did not want to be seen as a proponent of Négritude, and as upholding a diversionary project of (black) friends and (white) enemies in line with a classical conception of politics, the fact that he was inevitably placed in the context of this historic struggle is testimony to the danger when those who Rancière calls the *sans-parts*, those without a voice, claim a stake in the French 'literary republic'.

Another line of reception read Glissant's early work alongside other writers who overtly sided with the anticolonial struggle. For many commentators, Glissant's writings were considered to be politically “engaged because they were colonised and don't have another choice but revolution” (nr. 608). This view is, however, complicated by the fact that in several public communications, Glissant repeated his insistence that he wanted to be perceived as a poet, and not as a novelist or a political writer (nr. 471). Glissant's reluctance to engage in divisive speech and to privilege the poetic over the prosaic form, can be related to another main characteristic which the early reception of his work identified, namely Glissant's apparent 'in-between' stance (*entre-deux*) geared towards a synthesis of two seemingly opposed positions. An enumeration of the examples of this 'in-between' positionality noted in the early comments on his work would, for example include the following oppositions: literature and politics, poetry and prose, aesthetics and ethics, nature and culture, individuality and collectivity, the poetry of Saint-John Perse and Aimé Césaire, Martinique and France, the margins and the centre, the West and the non-West. As unbecoming as the Négritude label was to describe Glissant's political engagements, the 'committed writer' label did not apply to him either. Although his work and extra-literary activities relate to several of the characteristics associated with these intellectual traditions and the conceptions of the political underlying them, Glissant insisted that a crucial part of his work could not be adequately captured by the dominant ideologies of the initial stages of his literary career. As I will demonstrate in the ensuing subsection, the tradition of postcolonialism promised to provide a more appropriate framework for the discussion of the political dimension of Glissant's work.

1.3.1. Glissant's Politics in Postcolonial Literature – The Construction of an 'Early' and 'Late Glissant'

Since Michael J. Dash introduced Glissant to an English readership in 1995 as a “widely accepted theorist in anthropology, sociology and linguistics” (1995, 1), the academic fields that have taken up Glissant's work and concepts has grown significantly. With the advent of postcolonial theory at the end of the 20th century, several scholars considered that the fitting intellectual tradition for Glissant's work had been found. Following the lead of Celia Britton, who made the case for an inclusion of Glissant in the Anglophone postcolonial canon with her book *Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory – Strategies of Language and Resistance* (1999), a number of literary scholars took up the line of reading Glissant through a postcolonial angle. Britton's objective with *Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory* was to rectify what she perceived to be an omission by postcolonial theorists who readily referenced the works of Césaire and Fanon as founding figures of postcolonialism *avant la lettre* but who routinely omitted the work of Glissant. In Britton's view this was,

“an omission that is all the more surprising given the extent to which Glissant's theoretical concerns overlap with those of other postcolonial theorists. Such major themes of postcolonial theory as the reappropriation of history, writing and orality, hybridity, subalternity, the problematizing of identity, and the colonial construction of the Other are central to his work, in addition to the sustained analysis of the problem of language” (5).

Peter Hallward, who is less sympathetic to Glissant's work and to the postcolonial tradition in general, agreed with Britton when he remarked, albeit with a sarcastic undertone:

“Much of Glissant's work fits the postcolonial agenda to a T. He offers a subtly argued critique of conventional categories of identity and difference, along with densely poetic, firmly grounded evocations of an unusually contested territory. It is this eminently desirably combination of a project both 'post-identitarian' and context-specific that best explains, I think, Edouard Glissant's remarkable rise to eminence in francophone studies” (2001, 66).

Whereas Britton makes the case for a renewed study of Glissant's concepts through the lens of postcolonialism as a productive approach to foster new forms of resistance to the neoliberal hegemony, in Hallward's account, the view that Glissant merely repeated the main arguments of postcolonialism, whose political implications he rejects, implies that a closer engagement with his work will not heed any different result than the study of the canonical authors like Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. While a significant body of secondary literature has been dedicated to exploring the overlaps between the concepts of Glissant and other postcolonial writers,⁵⁸ to Glissant's own reservations against postcolonial discourse,⁵⁹ and to the different points of emphasis

58 Similar conceptions to Glissant's notions of identity and history have been found in the work of Edward Said (Kassab-Charfi 2011, 32-35), and Stuart Hall (Lasowski 2015, 467), in Homi Bhabha's work on hybridity and cross-cultural exchanges (de Loughrey and George B. Handely 2011: 23), or with Arjun Appadurai's notion of the imagination (Lasowski 2015, 482-84).

59 See Leupin (2016, 23-27), Gallagher (2008, 38), or Diawara and Glissant (2011).

on Glissant's work among Anglophone and Francophone postcolonial literary scholars,⁶⁰ my main focus in this sub-section falls on the debate about the political significance of Glissant's work that centres around the opposing positions of Hallward and Britton. The debate took place at a point in time when postcolonialism came under increasing scrutiny. With structural racism remaining a dominant aspect *within* Western nation-states and neoliberal globalisation taking over from neocolonialism as the main project to be opposed from a postcolonial perspective globally, the criteria for 'proper political' actions in and outside the realm of literature were the subject for renewed discussion at the turn of the 21st century. The question posed by several Glissant scholars was therefore what his work could offer in response to the challenges presented by this changed geopolitical landscape. Against Hallward's claim that Glissant's work had increasingly lost in political relevance over the years, Britton proposes that it had maintained some kind of political relevance. The following presentation of the respective positions held in this debate serves to point out the conceptual basis defining a consensus reached between Britton and Hallward concerning a chronological division of Glissant's political work into an 'early' and 'late' stage.

'Strictly Apolitical' – Peter Hallward's Critique of Glissant's Politics

In a review of Alain Baudot's bibliography of Glissant's work up until 1993, Maximilien Laroche could still criticise the early reception of Glissant's work for not paying sufficient attention to the overlaps between literary and the political action in the work of Glissant.⁶¹ The publication of Peter Hallward's book *Absolutely Postcolonial* (2001), in which Hallward dedicated a chapter to the critique of Glissant's political stance, marked the beginning of a relatively intense debate among Glissant scholars on precisely this question.

In a series of close readings of Glissant's novels up until the publication of *Tout Monde* in 1993, Hallward took up earlier criticism of the alleged theoretical and political ambiguities of the 'post-colonial' and made the claim about what he perceived to be an increasing 'depolicization' of Glissant's work. For Hallward, this trend signified an ideological error that he considers symptomatic of the tradition of postcolonial thought as a whole (66). Against what Hallward perceived to be a consensus among Glissant scholars on the 'fundamental consistency of his work' (70), he introduced the idea that Glissant's work could be divided into two chronological phases. The first phase was characterised by a defence of national specificity, a marked anti-colonial stance, and the campaign for an independent Martinique that led up to the publication of *Le discours antillais* in 1981. The second was marked by an abandonment of the concept of the nation towards

60 See particularly Jean Bessière's *Littératures Francophones et Politiques* (2009) and Charles Forsdick and David Murphy's *Francophone Postcolonial Studies* (2003).

61 In Maximilien Laroche's view, the problem in the reception was that it remained blind "in front of a political practice that supposes an apparently literary or philosophical theory in the work of a writer whose actions are by principle linked to his writing" (1994, 153).

an acceptance of the integration of Martinique into the neoliberal world-order and a growing preoccupation with a universal poetic project marked by *Poétique de la Relation* in 1990 (68). Hallward uses the terms of the 'specific' (nation) and the 'singular' or total (world) to denote these two phases in Glissant and the more general 'postmodern' evolution of his fiction in particular. In philosophical terms, Hallward describes this alleged 'degeneration' of political committed work towards a “kind of self-asserting, self-constituting singular immediacy on the Deleuzian or Spinozist model – an 'already immediate' immediacy, so to speak. This is what he calls 'la Relation’” (67).

Apart from the global or cosmopolitan thrust of postcolonial theory (69), which Hallward discredits as performing a “shift from the specific to singular always involves the refusal or worldly complexity, not the reverse” (70), Hallward also singles out the tradition's tendency to fuse 'the political and the cultural' (126), which in his view limits the political effectiveness of its scholarly work to the level of representation or expressions but precludes the very possibility of concrete political intervention. Perceiving postcolonial theory in general to be incompatible with divisive political action and mainly concerned with elaborations of 'cultural hybridity' and 'cultural mobility' (129), Hallward's central argument reads as follows:

“To this extent, Glissant's work in particular and postcolonial theory in general can only obstruct what is arguably the great political task of our time: the articulation of fully inclusive, fully egalitarian political principals which, while *specific* to the particular situation of their declaration, are nevertheless *subtracted* from their cultural environment” (126).

The standard for 'proper political' action upheld by Hallward in these formulations relies on the concept of the nation in a Jacobinian sens. In the absence of mobilisations and institutions on a global scale the nation remains for Hallward the ultimate tool for liberation from oppression (126-27). He defines the neo-Jacobian democratic nature of this nation as: “made up of all those who, whatever their cultural origin or way of being, collectively decide to assert (or re-assert) the right of self-determination” (127). Hallward associates this “*strictly political* conception of the nation” with Fanon's theory of national consciousness (128-29) as it was formulated during the Algerian liberation struggle, whose ideals Hallward perceives to have been “pushed aside as much by the postcolonial version of globalisation/creolisation as by the various forms of cultural or religious fundamentalism that have emerged in paranoid response” (127). The nation, Hallward argues with a view to the struggles of Palestinians, “remains the essential intermediary between local concerns and universal aspirations” (129): “Having a state of one's own still seems to matter a great deal to those who don't have one” (131). For Hallward, there is (still) no alternative to the nation state model, and, as he argues at the end of chapter:

“It is a mistake to believe, in the weary aftermath of structural adjustment and global liberalisation, that the age of incisive political invention is over. But if it is to have a lasting impact, then at least for the foreseeable future such invention will surely require the preservation, against all forms of culturalist *dépassement*, of that most ambiguous of modern political inventions: the democratic state” (132).

Based on the political theoretical outlines in the previous section, Hallward's reliance on a notion of politics that is not only state-centric (1.2.1.), but also relies on a strict differentiation between 'pure' and 'cultural politics', attributed to the theoretical framework of Alain Badiou which in turn shares several characteristics with Rancière's notion of the political, is particularly noteworthy (1.2.2.). As I argued in 1.2.3. these conceptualisations effectively discredit a long tradition of black liberation struggle invested in the cultural realm as irrelevant and ineffective.

The immediate impact of Hallward's thesis on a number of scholars working on Glissant in the fields of Francophone and Comparative Literature was remarkable. Adopting Hallward's separation of an 'early' and 'late Glissant', as well as the notion of 'the political' as being categorically distinct from the 'the cultural' or 'identitarian politics', authors like Chris Bongie (1998, 2008), Christopher L. Miller (2008) and Nick Nesbitt (2003, 2013a, 2013b) have published several monographs that are equally dismissive of Glissant's political project, particularly of its 'later stage'. In each case, the basic points of the critique hone in on an alleged dominance of the cultural and aesthetic and a decreasing emphasis on political divisions and conflicts associated with the emergence of the concept of the Tout-Monde, a concept which Miller dismissively referred to as a 'homogenizing machine' (2008, 356). Nesbitt, similarly argued that the 'pre-*Poetics of Relation*' Glissant was “the only truly political Glissant” and that his work since 1990 showed no interest in the plane of global colonial politics (2013b, 106), and that, in short “There is no Politics of Relation” (2013a, 243).

Writing in similarly dismissive terms, Bongie (2008) sees in Glissant's oeuvre an “obsessive insistence on the restorative virtues of a cultural poetics of Relation” (322), which he equates with a “post-political turn” (252). Bongie, also takes offense at what he perceives to be an authoritarian tone in *Le discours antillais*, which he refers to as written by a “Martinican-who-knows-everything-about-Martinique-and-the-Martinicans” (quoting Corzani, 143). From this angle, the Tout-Monde is just “wool over the eyes, trying to mask the process of globalization. Glissant just wants to serve as their expert in cultural communication” (quoting Masson, 322), and his 'poetic vision' will do nothing more than sanction a 'euphoric acquiescence to the world's unjust course in which poetry becomes the symbolic Valium that allows us to survive and affirm a painful and violent world beyond our control” (329). In contrast to Hallward, who provides no direct explanation for the perceived change in Glissant's political outlook, other than an alluded to infatuation with French postmodern philosophies of Deleuze, which he sees as an ideological error of postcoloniality',

Bongie draws a connecting between Hallward's literary analysis to certain biographical aspects shaping 'the late Glissant'. Among the extra-textual reasons for his alleged 'depoliticization', Bongie cites his editorial work at the *UNESCO Courier*, his professorships at US-universities and his change of publishers, from *Editions du Seuil* to *Gallimard*, the publisher Pierre Bordieu once dismissively referred to as the “bastion of pure literature” (342), as proof that Glissant had effectively jumped political camps from taking sides with the 'minor' to the 'major'. The accusation that, the 'late Glissant' was so entangled with the very French government that once banned him, that one could not turn to his work looking for effective ways to critique French neocolonial practices, was 'proven' by Bongie with the fact that the French prime minister Dominique de Villepin prefaced one of his works (363). The 'selling out' of the 'early Glissant's' anti-colonial struggle credentials towards a cooption of the 'late Glissant' by the French state, was clearly aimed at dealing the image of Glissant as a radical postcolonial writer a final blow by revealing how the relativist stance of his work was also performed in his life.

Hallward's critique of Glissant's politics as apolitical is consistent with the neo-Jacobinian concept of 'pure politics'. From this angle, Hallward and those following his work, have produced a strong case for the dismissal of Glissant's political work. Although a case can be made that Hallward's claims can be disputed *on their own conceptual basis*,⁶² of which the ensuing position held by Britton and Charles Forsdick can count as emblematic, my main interest lies in producing an alternative reading that operates with a different conception of the political, to which I have alluded in 1.2.3. and which will be further elaborated in the following section.

62 See also the part on *Glissant the Political Commentator* in sub-section 1.3.2.

In Defence of 'A New Form of Political Action in a Globalised World' – Celia Britton's Response to Hallward

In an essay titled *Globalization and Political Action in the Work of Edouard Glissant* (2009) Celia Britton directly responded to the claims made by Bongie and Hallward. Generally acknowledging the validity of their two-fold division of Glissant's oeuvre, referring to it as a change in “focus, mood and political position” and a shift from a national Martinican concerns to global concerns in the last works of Glissant, Britton, however, suggests to read this change as *a positive development*. Claiming that Glissant's shift in emphasis was based on the realisation that the 'old' nationalist struggles had, in the course of the 20th century encountered new kinds of opposition, particularly in the form of multi-national companies and the general dominance of the economic realm over the political system that demonstrate the limitations of a state-centred forms of resistance, these geopolitical transformations required *the invention of innovative political strategies* that no longer relied on the concepts of the nation-state or the organisation of a liberation movement in the sense implored by Hallward.

Britton does not view the 'late Glissant' as having abandoned all forms of political action, Britton argued, that Glissant supported specific types of political action in his writings and activist work that were strongly linked to a global imaginary: “but local action must be carried out with an 'imagination of the totality' a consciousness of the equality and interrelatedness of all the world's communities” (9). Instead of prescribing to a belief in a singular global political strategy, in the sense of a Marxist ideology, for Britton, Glissant's focus was predicated on the importance of developing new forms of consciousness based on the conviction that “all political progress depends, beyond intervention in local situations, on the long-term development of this transformative consciousness of totality – depends, in other words, on 'changing mentalities’” (10). Distinguishing Glissant's political practice as a *political cultural* practice, from the normative approach upheld by Hallward, Britton claims that the basis of Glissant's politics is best understood as a form of epistemological anti-racism. To privilege the cultural realm over the economic, in Britton's eyes, “does not mean that the 'late Glissant' is apolitical”, she emphasises, “antiracist politics (which, in simple terms, defines Relation) is very different from no politics at all” (11).⁶³ Without discussing some of the later works by Glissant, in which he at times repositioned himself as a public intellectual or 'committed writer', such as the pamphlets/manifestoes *Quand les murs tombent* (2007) his *Adresse à Barack Obama* (2009) both written together with Patrick Chamoiseau and the *Manifeste pour les 'produits' de haute nécessité* (2009), Britton goes on to argue that this set of

⁶³ Charles Forsdick, agrees with Britton and considers the work of 'the late Glissant' as an example of what Edward Said called 'late style'. To Said, the final work of a great artist does not end in “harmony and resolution but as intransigence, difficulty and unresolved contradiction” (2010, 122).

texts: “clearly signal Glissant's return to a more overtly militant political perspective, based now on the 'place' of France rather than Martinique, but crucially, still on the principles of Relation, creolization, and so on that he developed in the 1990s. And this in itself is surely evidence that these principles can form the basis of a viable new form of political action in a globalized world” (11). In an attempt to provide concrete examples in Glissant's writing and activist work, Britton writes:

“The new form of political action in the globalized world, in other words, is to combine local action with global consciousness of Relation — summed up most recently in the slogan 'Act in your locality, think with the world.' The importance of local action — 'There are concrete campaigns of resistance that must be fought. In the place in which one is' (IPD, 107) — is emphasized with specific examples: Mandela and the Roma, the defense of endangered languages, and an ecological project for Martinique in which Glissant himself has been actively involved” (9-10).

Although my own approach shares a similar reading of Glissant's late political practice with Britton, and thus disagrees with Hallward, Britton's response remains on similar conceptual grounds as Hallward. Adopting his standard for 'proper political action', she makes the case for a reading that points out in what ways both Glissant's writing and his activist work could be seen as living up to the standard of a radical Fanonian nationalist project. From my perspective, Britton has to be credited for pointing out how, what Glissant said, wrote and did in the later stages of his career, could still be modelled along the same lines, albeit at a different point in time and global geopolitical constellation. However, bearing an even broader conception of political literature and what I have referred to as the black literary tradition (1.2.3.) in mind, Britton's response relies on a quite conventional understanding of politics when she insists, in other words, that cultural politics is *also* real politics. Put differently, and in quite general terms, Britton avoids deeper political theoretical questions by choosing to cite a narrow selection of Glissant's political statements and actions in defence against Hallward's accusations.

Britton, moreover, does not attempt to discuss the explicit forms of local or global political action that could be developed on the basis of Glissant's political theory, that is outside his own actions and statements. Pointing out the applicability of his epistemological concept of 'antiracism', could have, for instance, strengthened her argument against Hallward's insistence on the empiric ground that progressive liberation movements continue to rely on the nation-state model.⁶⁴ Britton's work thus more generally confirms the impression, that when the political dimension of Glissant's work is defended using conventional conceptions of the political, the counter arguments do not reach the same level of analytical force as they are contained in Nesbitt and Bongie's accusations of Glissant's work being just 'wool over the eyes' and 'a symbolic Valium' against the structural violence waged in the name of neoliberal globalisation.

⁶⁴ This notion has been contested by scholars in Caribbean and Native American Studies that explore alternative political models such as non-sovereignty (4.1.2.).

Britton is not alone in her defence of Glissant's politics. Her work joins a corpus of literature that chooses to approach the political dimension of Glissant's oeuvre from the angle of 'ethics'. Ethics refers more generally to moral principles that tend to be limited to interpersonal relationships, whereas the notion of politics is more directly tied to collective decisions in a national, international or global realm. Perhaps owing to a discomfort with the negative associations the term politics carries, or to the limitation of the political to the traditional 'politics of politicians', several scholars perceive Glissant's work as upholding a particular ethics. Mary Gallagher (2008) stresses this point and considers the 20th century as a post-colonial and post-political moment that is 'inflected or deflected by an ethical turn' (14). Her main hypothesis in that regard, is that Glissant's "ethical and the poetic imperatives are not just compatible, but also associated, and that their mutual intrication is dependent on their shared insubordinate, or at least critical engagement with the temptations or imperatives of closure and totalization often inherent in the plots and processes of politics and hermeneutics" (21).

For Patrick Chamoiseau, Glissant's work could also be read as advocating a particular ethics, "a complex ethics that is no longer operating in the framework of a nation, a language, a culture or an identity exclusive to an Other, but articulated on the excessiveness of the world-totality"⁶⁵ (quoted in Lasowski 2015, 411). Romuald Fonkoua also insisted on a quite general level that Glissant was "open to the struggles of all oppressed people of the world, without excluding one of them"⁶⁶ (quoted in Lasowski, 423), and Alain Ménéil tried to distinguish Glissant's (practical) ethics from a (discursive) moral dimension which Glissant rejected in his own writing, "ethics refers to action whereas morality refers to the order of Discourse"⁶⁷ (2011, 115-16). Although the inherently ethical stance in Glissant's work is widely accepted, the question of how Glissant's own writing on politics can be articulated in relation to this alleged ethics of relation, remains unanswered by these writers. Pointing to the concrete links between the explicitly political and the poetic Leupin, for example, cites Glissant's following claim in a 2010 interview that, "*Il faut qu'une politique comprenne, accepte qu'il y a un tremblement du monde [...] renoncer à la pensée unique [...] Moi je crois que notre poétique aujourd'hui ça ne doit plus être une poétique de définition, ça doit être une poétique de la relation. Et si nous avons une poétique de relation, nous avons une politique de relation. Et la, c'est bon*"⁶⁸ (quoted in Leupin 2016, 33). The repeated occurrence of passages like this, where Glissant explicitly insisted on a political dimension of his work, suggest that a limitation

65 "une éthique complexe qui n'est plus à l'échelle d'un cadre national, d'une langue, d'une culture, d'une identité exclusive de l'Autre, mais articulé sur les démesures d'une totalité-monde", my translation.

66 "ouvert à tous les combats des opprimés du monde sans exclusivité", my translation.

67 "l'éthique est de l'ordre de l'agir quand la Morale relève de l'ordre du Discours", my translation

68 "A politics needs to understand, to accept that there is a trembling of the world [...] renounced the thought of the One [...] I believe that today our poetics should no longer be a poetics of definition but one of relation. And if we have a poetics of relation we have a politics of relation. And that's good", my translation.

of his political practice to an ethical dimension does not do justice. While his overall project clearly works at a distance from narrowly defined politics, the connections between his poetics and politics still call for a more comprehensive articulation of their interaction.

In sum, an effective response to Hallward's critique from a standpoint that seeks to combine literary and political theoretical approaches, would have to explore a reading of Glissant's politics on different conceptual basis of 'the political' than the one maintained by Hallward and Britton. The assumption behind this proposition is that, by paying equal attention to the 'politics of literature' and how cultural-politics intervenes in conventional political systems, will make the full extent of what could count as political in Glissant's oeuvre visible and would, moreover allow for an exploration of the abstract political implications of Glissant's politics of relation outside the limitations of his own life. Since Glissant's passing in 2011, a compromise between the two positions held between Hallward and Britton has emerged in a set of monographs that are mainly geared towards a canonisation of Glissant in various academic fields. I will now turn to this corpus of texts to point out the aspects scholars have identified as constituting Glissant's political legacy in this framework.

1.3.2. Cementing Glissant's Political Legacy – Keeping Apart What Belongs Together

In a special edition of *Revue des Sciences humaines* (2013) dedicated to Glissant, Valérie Loichot summarised the general direction of the academic debate on Glissant's politics as being confined to the narrow question of whether Glissant was, in fact, 'political enough or not'. Referring to Nesbitt and his essay in the edited volume she writes: “His summary of the debate between Peter Hallward, Celia Britton, Chris Bongie and himself makes the polemical character of the debate about Glissant's text visible: Was Glissant political enough?”⁶⁹ (12). Loichot's evaluation of the 'polemic' around Glissant's politics is correct in light of my reading of the discussion in the previous section. With the conception of the political underlying the question of *whether Glissant was political enough* remaining vague, a conventional view of the politics of literature, much in line with Sartre's 'committed writer' had, in fact, been unknowingly or unknowingly reasserted.

The years following Glissant's passing in 2011 saw the publications of several long monographs on Glissant's work that pursued the ambition to read Glissant's work, now complete, as a whole. In all of these 'big books on Glissant', the political dimension of his work is prominently acknowledged, although not foregrounded. I consider these works to, for the most part, be shaped by a compromise or stalemate reached between the arguments advanced by Hallward and Britton. In other words, they are marked by an awareness of the militant nature of the 'young' Glissant's

⁶⁹ “*Sa synthèse du débat entre Peter Hallward, Celia Britton, Chris Bongie et lui-même nous ouvre une fenêtre sur le caractère polémique du texte glissantien autour de la question: Glissant, était-il assez politique?*”, my translation.

politics and a defence of the more moderate political activities of the late Glissant with the aim of cementing Glissant's legacy as a philosopher and poet *who also took politics seriously*. These books include the study by Aliocha Wald Lasowski *Édouard Glissant, penseur des archipels* (2015), Alexandre Leupin's *Edouard Glissant, Philosophe. Héraclite et Hegel dans le Tout-Monde* (2016), and Alain Ménil *Les voies de la créolisation* (2011), and Manuel Norvat's *Le chant du divers. Introduction à la philopoétique d'Édouard Glissant* (2015). Several of these authors devote separate chapters to Glissant's politics. Lasowski, for example, structures his work on Glissant into the different rubriques of philosophy, poetry, novels, theatre, aesthetics and politics. Ménil's book also contains a separate chapter promisingly called *Politique et Poétique de la Relation*. However, the full extent to which Glissant's politics and poetics are linked is not being explored in either books. In Leupin's account, Glissant's politics is even relegated to a footnote that fills two thirds of a page, in which Leupin limits himself to a critique of Nesbitt's 'political transcendence' from a philosophical angle (2016, 31), as if a clear position on the political dimension of Glissant's work would run counter Leupin's main concern, which consists in placing Glissant's philosophy alongside those of canonical or universal Western thinkers such as Hegel.

Taken as a whole, this corpus of texts thus remains highly ambivalent about the political implications of Glissant's work, and hesitates to take up the theoretical question of 'the political'. As a result, instead of a more thorough engagement with the question of how his political and poetic projects have been entangled with one another, a separation of these spheres emerges from these attempts at canonising Glissant. This body of work has thus produced separate categories in which Glissant is placed either as (a) an activist, (b) a political commentator or (c) a writer whose style of writing has political implications. An awareness of the various writings and actions falling under these categories is important in the context of this study, since it provides an overview of which actions of Glissant *have already been made visible as political*. My own study will eventually complement these categories and the lists they produce with an alternative view of his political practice that becomes discernable once a different conception of the political is employed. As I have outlined in the general introduction and in my engagement with the concepts of the political (1.1., 1.2.), the main interest of this study is not whether Glissant *was political or not* but *in what ways* and *in what contexts* his work can be *considered as carrying political potentials*. A response to these questions requires a shift away from a separation by genre, and the general conceptual terrain of the discussion in order to investigate the interactions between the poetic and the political in Glissant's work.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Neil Roberts supports this kind of approach when he argues that “an awareness of the disparate interpretations of the relationships among politics, the political and literature are required” to read novels such as *Le quatrième siècle*, because in his view, “the arts of the imagination allow us to escape narrow notions of the political” (2015, 147).

Glissant the Activist

Most studies on Glissant acknowledge his militant political engagements in the early 1960s as proof for his role as a 'committed writer' in the Sartrean sense of the term. A classical account of this kind consists of the following initiatives and events: Glissant's engagement as an adolescent during the electoral campaign of Césaire in 1945 as part of the group *Franc Jeu*, the co-founding of the *Front des Antillais et Guyanais pour l'Autonomie* (FAGA) in 1959 and its clear opposition to Césaire's policy of departmentalisation, and his signature under *Le Manifeste de 121*.⁷¹ Most of the renditions of his political activism stop at the point where the FAGA was dismantled following an order of de Gaulle and Glissant was banned from returning to Martinique. Few accounts go as far as mentioning that, after being classified as an agitator and '*indépendantist*' in December 1959 – the year after he received the *Prix Renaudot* – Glissant attempted to break the ban and travelled to Point-à-Pitre in Guadeloupe where he was captured by French soldiers and sent back to Paris (Lasowski 2016, 424). Even fewer still are accounts that refer to Glissant's trip to Cuba to receive instructions by the Castro regime in their revolutionary model and its potential application to Martinique (Noudelmann 2018, 177) (3.3.). Depending strongly on a conventional understanding of political engagement that is premised on extra-textual initiatives for or against particular states and governments, only few scholars have extended the notion of 'activist work' further. In these studies, Glissant's involvement in the *Parliament of Writers* in 1993 (Norvat 2015, 261, Britton 2009, 10), his editorial work for the *ACOMA journal* in the 1970s and the *UNESCO Courier* in the 1980s, his ecological project of turning Martinique into a *Pays biologique du monde* (Britton 2009, 10), the project of setting up a museum for the memorialisation of slavery in France as outlined in his monograph *Mémoires des esclavages* (2007), or the creation of the educational institutions, the *Institut martiniquais d'études* in Martinique in 1967 and the *Institut du Tout-Monde* 2006 in Paris are being listed. These studies already employ a wider notion of political action that is not limited to interactions with the policies of particular nation-states but includes the overlaps with the cultural and social realms. In cases where these initiatives receive sustained attention from critics, they are, however, usually considered as 'failures' in the sense that few of these projects have materialised or achieved their anticipated goals or outlasted Glissant's lifetime. This aspect is particularly noteworthy in that the question of political success or failure, of importance or irrelevance adds another criteria on top of the question of whether an action is political or not.⁷² It is directly tied to the question of whether his political practice is worth engaging with. In cases where this list of activist activities is

71 See for example Lasowski (2015, 423), Roberts (2015, 154); Norvat (2015, 259), Crowley (2009, 90); Leupin (2016, 31), Kassab-Charfi (2011, 21).

72 An even rarer consideration is the question to what extent activist groups have taken up Glissant's concepts. Lasowski mentions in that regard that First Nations in Canada explicitly referred to Glissant in their campaigns around 2003, and that his work was also of importance for the politics of linguistic creolisations in the ABC islands and Louisiana (2015, 408).

disconnected from other areas of his work, it appears to mainly function as a declaration of 'struggle credentials' in terms of strictly defined nationalist militancy that serves to *cast a cloud of political relevance and legitimacy over his later work* as well.

The set of extra-textual actions that tend to be listed as Glissant's activism still plays an important role in this study as well. Instead of keeping his activist work as separate from his literary work, my approach, however, asks how these different activities are related to one another? Put differently, how can Glissant's activism be 'read' differently from a theoretical approach that takes his philosophy of relation as well as recent work around the notion of life-writing seriously that, at its basis, unsettles the neat separation between life and writing? (see 1.4.1. and 1.4.2.)

Glissant the Political Commentator

A second prominent strand of scholarship interested in the political aspects of Glissant's work has attempted to establish a set canon of 'political texts' by Glissant. The underlying conception of the political in these works is still conventional in that it asks which parts of Glissant's texts directly engage with the political system of nation-states, in critical or supportive ways. This set of texts usually includes his essayistic work leading up to *Le discours antillais*, in line with Hallward's conceptualisation of the 'early Glissant'. Nick Nesbitt has made the argument that Glissant's most overtly political writings, in his terms “the most radical statement of anticolonial Caribbean critique next to Fanon and Daniel Guerin” (2015, 136), could be found in the anticolonial manifesto *Les Antilles et la Guyane à l'heure de la décolonisation* (1961). The goals of the *Front des Antillais et Guyanais pour l'Autonomie*, namely autonomy from France and Caribbean federalism, were elaborated by Glissant two decades later in the *Le discours antillais*. The dominant trend in the literature on Glissant is to mark those texts as 'exceptions' to the rule of an increasingly 'depoliticised Glissant'. Scholars who do not adhere to this degenerative thesis, and who agree with Britton's side of the debate (1.3.2), have made the case for the inclusion of the political pamphlets or manifestoes which Glissant published in his later years, and which directly address political figures like Barack Obama and Nicolas Sarkozy to this canon (LIBM, QLMT). This line of scholarship contends that these overtly political texts are not exceptions in Glissant's work but that an explicit engagement with political events, figures and policies features on a regular basis throughout his oeuvre. A deconstruction of Hallward's model that operates *on his own conceptual terms*, could be made by placing Glissant's essays on a continuum between the conventional binaries of 'the political' and 'the poetic' on one axis, local and global concerns on another axis. Such a division – which is in opposition to the approach I am proposing in this study – would identify works like *La case du commandeur* (1981) or *Une nouvelle région du monde* (2006) on an extreme 'poetic' and *Quand les murs tombent* (2006) and *Les Antilles et la Guyane à l'heure de la*

décolonisation (1961) on an extremely 'political' side of the field. It would, moreover place *La Lézarde* (1958) on a local, and *Philosophy de la Relation* (2009) on a global level. Since this kind of map would reproduce the exact binaries which I am problematising here, this map would do little more than disprove the critic's view of an apolitical determinism or a trend that moves from the local to the global, effectively ignoring the intermixing and back-and-forth movements between these different dimensions in his work.

Similar to an awareness of Glissant's personal commitment to concrete political struggles, an engagement with Glissant's explicit political commentary is not without its merits. Several scholars have directed their attention to this canon of texts and have abstracted insights of political theoretical importance from it. Neil Roberts has, for example, distilled a critique of the form of the nation-state, a teleological view of development, and the violence of the plantation system from *Le discours antillais* (2015, 151-52) (Lasowski 2015, 411). Other overtly political debates in which the 'late Glissant' participated actively include, among others, the issue of the memorialisation of the slave trade and the question of reparations (TTM 195, ME 21), a critique of the dominant policy model towards immigration and integration (QLMT, UNRM 84), and the dominant model of democracy (TTM 81-82, ME 133), as well as a critique of power waged in the field of international relations (LIBM). To be sure, these overtly political statements are of great interest for my study, as *overt or explicit articulations of a politics of relation*. In Glissant's oeuvre they do, however, only appear in a highly dispersed manner and – this cannot be stressed enough – are still not articulated in the transparent prose of political theory but, always, in a poetic language open to interpretation. This produces the impression that focussing exclusively on the few passages in Glissant's work that express *what the poet said about politics* would only bring to light the tip of the metaphorical iceberg, and by doing so effectively ignore the more general political philosophy and the full extent of the political practice that underlies these formulations.

Glissant's Politics of Style

The political implications of language, of text formats and literary techniques are situated on an even lower level of visibility, or in an even more opaque level than the previous aspects scholars have identified in Glissant's work as being of political significance. Against the background of the discussion so far, this dimension refers back to Rancière's conception introduced earlier (1.2.2.), of an 'absolutisation of style' concerned with the way “the sayable and the visible, words and things” (2011, 9) potentially constitute a 'literary democracy'. The view that the 'most literary texts are, in fact the most political’ (Harrison quoted in Mary Gallagher 2008, 7), echoes Rancière's view pointed out above and has also been expressed by Spivak when she argued for the 'power of fiction' against 'social scientific fluency' due to its “power to challenge, to interrupt, to trouble certainties,

orders, boundaries, and distinctions, not least the distinction between the political and the non-political” itself (quoted in Gallagher 2008, 8-9). Being aware of these inherently political potentials of literature as an art form that Glissant characterised as “*ni dominateur, ni systématique, ni imposant*” (quoted in Gallagher 2008, 93), opens up the field of political analysis in a dramatic fashion. An analysis of the author's actions, of his political statements or literary themes no longer suffices from this angle. In terms of method, Timothy Clarke has expressed a word of caution towards this line of enquiry: “the literary [...] cannot be fully understood theoretically but must be engaged in its specific performance (word by word, line by line, in the unfolding text)” (quoted in Gallagher 2008, 11). In terms of the politics of form, to which I have alluded in the preface, there is an extensive debate on the historical and formal entanglements of literary genres like the novel, that has been critiqued for being intimately involved in the Western enlightenment project, the invention of nation-state communities (Anderson 2006) and the maintenance of bourgeois privilege (Siskin 2001). The ways in which Glissant subverted the form of the classical novel takes on a particular political dimension from this perspective.

The way Glissant has used stylistic, structural and technical elements in his writing is arguable of more specific importance than the general characteristics of literature. In a first instance, this concerns what Glissant called *langage*, a way of expression exclusive to a particular writer or a community at large. *Langage* is separate from an official language with its complete system of grammar and syntax. The creation of one's own *langage*, one that is in tune with one's location or landscape, is of utmost importance to Glissant and prevails over attempts of being understood by the greatest number of readers at all cost. Glissant's work therefore, claims the right to remain opaque to readers who cannot relate to its particular *langage*, despite being familiar with the language and its local dialect. Differentiating between *langue* and *langage*, he wrote in *Traité du Tout-Monde*: “*La langue, c'est le creuset toujours bouleversé de mon unité. Le langage, ce serait le champ ouvert de ma Relation*”⁷³ (TTM 112), and in a formulation appearing frequently in his work: “*Je te parle dans ta langue, et c'est dans mon langage que je t'entends*”⁷⁴ (PHR 123).

In addition to the claim about the inherent political power of literature and of *langage*, Glissant also maintained an unconventional view of 'the poet', as introduced at the beginning of this introduction. A poet in his view can be an average person, a politician, a healer, a storyteller or a poet in the literal sense of the term. His or her defining traits are that “*Le poète tache à enrhisomer son lieu dans la totalité, à diffuser la totalité dans son lieu: la permanence dans l'instant et inversement, l'ailleurs dans l'ici et réciproquement*”⁷⁵ (TTM 123). In extension, 'the poetic' is not

73 “Language is the melting pot that is always disrupted by unity. The *langage* is the open field of my Relation”, my translation.

74 “I speak to you in your language, and I understand you in my *langage*”, my translation.

75 “The poet undertakes to create rhizomes between his place and the totality, to diffuse the totality in his place: permanence in the instance and the other way round, reciprocally the 'there' in the 'here'”, my translation.

synonymous with poetry either. However, if we consider poetry as the 'most radical and most personal way of literary expression imaginable' (SAT 16) it is important to note that it carries some of its main characteristics. The mere act of refraining from prose, from breaking with existing formats and creating a new language, one's own *langage*, is the revolutionary act of poetry in his view. To repeat, in the intellectual milieu of the time, this view presented a fundamental opposition to Sartre's ideas on 'committed writing' who – although he curiously made an exception for black writers in that regard – considered prose to be the only vehicle to bring about change, since poetry was by nature opaque and abstract, hiding more than it reveals (Anderson 1995, 20). Analogously to the equation of literature with politics mentioned before, several Glissant scholars have noted that in the context of globalisation in particular, the poetic takes on a new significance. Faced with what he considered to be globalisation's violent project of homogenisation, Glissant upheld the conviction that the imaginary or the poetic mode of expression needs to be seen as the only one capable of intimating “how the non-reductive integration of specificities within a unified (yet non-closed) relational yet non-systematic world might work” (Gallagher 2008, 92). From this angle, the poetic is considered as one of the few spaces that allows for a protection of paradoxes and gaps against the insistence on apparently coherent narratives and smooth surfaces. It appears to exist in contrast to fixed systems and closed notions of theory that aim at final explanations by reverting, more often than not, to the binary oppositions of modernity (Dash 1995, 11).

In sum, the preceding sub-sections identified two main distinctions that currently constitute a consensus among Glissant scholars working in the field of postcolonial literary criticism. The first distinction concerns the difference between an 'early' and 'late' political phase, phases that are characterised by different degrees of intensity as well as local (particular) and global (universal) concerns. The second distinction concerns a conceptual differentiation between different modes of his political practice: activism, commentary and literary style. As I will demonstrate in following section, my reading of Glissant's work effectively works to unsettle these distinctions which I deem to be a problematic departmentalisation of a more wholistic political practice that transcends the borders of chronology (early/late), geography (local/global) and genre (activism, commentary, style).

1.3.3. Interrupting a Western Monologue – Introducing Glissant to Political Theoretical Scholarship

This sub-section endorses a markedly different perspective than the previous two by explicitly focussing on scholarship that works with Glissant's oeuvre as *political theory*. The question of *whether Glissant was political enough or not* (Loichot) is not a concern for the following approaches. Instead, the question they interrogate is whether or not Glissant's work at

large can be considered as providing innovative ideas for the field of political theory.

The volume *Postcolonialism and Political Theory* edited by Nalini Persram (2007) is of particular interest in this regard, since it forms part of a wider effort of scholars to address or undo the structural Eurocentric bias of political theory. Although Glissant occupies a prominent position in Persram's volume, Hwa Yol Jung's contribution *Edouard Glissant's Aesthetics of Relation as Diversality and Creolization* (2007) does not directly engage the aspects of Glissant's work that would be interest for a more concrete exploration of the specificities of his politics and remains vague about the more concrete implications of Glissant's philosophy. Instead, Jung points out broader epistemological similarities between Glissant and thinkers and poets like Merleau-Ponty, Segalen and Heidegger. In Jung's reading of *Poetics of Relation* and *Caribbean Discourse*, he finds that Glissant's philosophical project is invested in countering the racism inherent in Enlightenment philosophers such as Kant and Hume (195) and is committed to a 'cosmopolitanism to come' whose specificities are not made any more concrete (209). While Jung points to a hybridity of Glissant's work as taking place between poetics, philosophy and political activism (198), and that political, cultural and literary work thus do not have to be considered as incompatible (208), the actual form or direction of this intertextuality is not further elaborated.

Robert Shilliam's article *Decolonising the Grounds of Ethical Inquiry – A Dialogue between Kant, Foucault and Glissant* (2011) works in a similar direction by framing Glissant against the philosophic projects of Kant and Foucault, but attempts to discuss Glissant more specifically in the context of the political studies subfield of International Relations. Like Jung, Shilliam takes issue with the Western academy's 'narcissistic monologue' among European and North American theorists. As a counter suggestion, Shilliam proposes the 'living body of the maroon' as “the figure at the centre of Glissant's ethical inquiry” and as a particularly productive intervention in the field of political theory. As Shilliam writes it is “the living body of the maroon, demonised and outcast in French memory, whose melanin splits and fractures the totalising and blinding light of Republican history” (663). In an imaginary dialogue between the maroon, Kant, Foucault and Glissant, Shilliam summarises the positions held by each of these thinkers in the following manner:

“Using the maroon as a mouthpiece, Glissant dares to valorise these other spaces and sequences as prime sites for learning about and thinking through a colonial modernity. Glissant accepts that Foucault's Greek ethos of creativity resonates in the vernacular of Creole – but only as another patois, not as a mother tongue. Glissant is warmed by Kant's relationality but roundly decries its grotesque limitation of human dignity. What is out there, argues Glissant, extra to the experience of the European philosopher and its work of art, is neither sub humanity, nor untimeliness, nor a waiting room of history. It is, rather, a crossroads of relational experiences where, upon arrival, Europeans would have to speak with provincial humility (663-64).”

Through this unlikely and anachronistic *mise-en-relation*, or linking, several important characteristic of Glissant's political practice become visible. The first and most important one refers to 'other spaces and sequences', thus alternative spaces of learning and acting politically that have hitherto not been seen or recognised as worthy of theorisation. The second one is the inclusive nature of Glissant's maroon figure. This inclusivity acknowledges the productive aspects in both Kant and Foucault's philosophies, yet insists on a difference that exists outside, and is yet in contact with, the realm of European philosophic tradition. Contrasting the maroon to Kant's enlightened philosopher and the role of the work of art in Foucault, Shilliam argues that Glissant's work effectively questions established political concepts like citizenship away from the notion of 'single roots' (1.4.1.) towards creole, or multiple forms of belonging, and from the right to self-determination towards a problematisation of history and a shift in the grounds of ethical inquiry towards the "potential solidarities of the enslaved" (660). For the line of research I pursue throughout this thesis, Shilliam's article is of ground-breaking importance in that it serves as an example for where Glissant's work diverts from the established canon of Enlightenment and postmodern theory. It also forcefully introduces the notion that Glissant's politics is related to the tradition of marronage, a direction I will pursue throughout this study (1.4.3.).

The main concern for Shilliam in this particular article does, however, remain on the interruption of the monologue in the Western academy by introducing an 'Other' voice that breaks with its established Eurocentric temporal and spatial references. He ends the essay in that regard as a sort of prayer: "Set all the captives free from the bind of the European-modern. Then perhaps, meditates the African-maroon, the learned will wake from their intellectual dreamland to experience the thrill and awe of dialogue" (65). Due to the clarity of his proposition of aligning Glissant's ethics with the political practice of the maroon, Shilliam's intervention offers a next step from the 'departmentalisation' of Glissant's politics outlined above. However, an actual engagement with the concrete political implications of Glissant's work, as well as abstract political ideas pertinent to international relations theory fall outside the scope of Shilliam's article. Although the textual basis of his argument is for the most part *Le discours antillais*, the elaborate discussions in this book on the political necessity and potentials of the establishment of a political Caribbean federation, or on the cultural preconditions for such an inter- or transnational network of islands, are not explored as a potential extension of the maroon's philosophic stance.

Neil Roberts monograph *Freedom as Marronage* (2015), moves on from Shilliam's arguments in the sense that his work is conceived as the first attempt at actually identifying key elements of Glissant's political thought and setting them in relation with debates in political theory on the notion of freedom. Like Shilliam, Roberts views Glissant's work as being embedded in the

tradition of marronage. He argues that “more than any other major thinker in the last half century, Glissant situates both the figure of the maroon and the idea of marronage (flight) in its multiple types at the center of his entire work, from poems, plays, and novels to numerous volumes of philosophical essays” (144). Shilliam and Roberts thus arrive at Glissant and marronage from two different directions. Whereas Shilliam finds the figure of the maroon via political theory and as the abstract pendant to Kant's philosopher and Foucault's artists, Roberts turns to Glissant as a key theorist of marronage. Like Shilliam, Roberts finds that Glissant's philosophy is less categorically opposed to any other philosophical current than it is marked by an integrative approach that can accommodate various traditions in a 'creole' manner: “Glissant's political theory integrates the poeticism and historicism of Afro-Caribbean thought, scholarship on creolization, reflections on the post-plantation American south, the nuances of Francophone theorizing, and the contours of French and German Continental philosophy” (143).

While Roberts shares Shilliam's interest in 'creolising political theory',⁷⁶ the main emphasis in his chapter on Glissant is in carving out an alternative conception of freedom as entailed in Glissant's conceptualisation of marronage. He contrasts this movement of freedom to static conditions of freedom and unfreedom that he finds characteristic for most of Western political theory, particularly on questions of slavery (9, 13). Roberts considers Glissant to bridge these negative and positive articulations of freedom into a unified whole (142). In political theoretical terms, Roberts ventures into new territory when he undertakes to identify what he calls 'four stages of freedom' (155-63) in Glissant's work towards what he calls 'sociogenic marronage', a conception of flight that emphasises that movements of marronage are intimately connected with the creation of new social orders, a notion that will be of repeated importance throughout this thesis (2.1.2., 5.1.2.). As the title of Roberts' monograph points out, the main thrust of *Freedom as Marronage* is, however, mainly directed at formulating alternative conceptions of freedom in which Glissant's work features towards the end of a long genealogy of Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean thinkers. Roberts' interest is thus different from my own focus on Glissant's politics of relation: While Robert's subtracts a blue-print towards liberation from *Le discours antillais*, my work pursues a relational reading of Glissant's complete oeuvre to identify the political strategies running through them. This difference in direction still leaves a wide array of overlaps between Roberts' study and my own, a similarity that is above all visible by a common emphasis on the maroon characteristic of Glissant's political practice. The pioneering efforts by Shilliam and Roberts to *think politically with Glissant* thus both open up a space for further approaches that take Glissant's work seriously in the field of political studies. They above all confirm my intuition that Glissant's work can be a

76 For a discussion about this notion see 6.3.3.

productive point of reference in this field, both on a broader epistemological level as well as a source of concrete theorisation on matters that are of central importance to the field, of which the notion of freedom, citizenship, and community creation have already been mentioned.

In sum, as this overview of Glissant's position in the fields of postcolonial literary studies and political theory indicated, combining insights from these two fields can be a productive line of study to avoid some of the pitfalls I have identified in the manner in which the political dimension of Glissant is currently being discussed. This is, above all directed against a strong trend in the secondary literature to *not* engage with Glissant's project as a whole, on its own terms, or in relation to its context, but to rather to present it as standing in for *something else*: a post- or anti-Western philosopher,⁷⁷ a representation of the postcolonial tradition at large, or a middle ground between liberal and radical black politics (Roberts 2015, 147). Although none of these perspectives are all together misplaced, I find that these views do, however, say little about the specificity of the political dimensions of his work itself.

Section Summary

Based on the view that Hallward's critique of Glissant provides a too narrow conceptual framework in which his politics could be effectively discussed, this section provided a broad overview of the main aspects that have thus far been considered political about Glissant's work, both in the narrow sense of activism and the broader sense of the political aspects associated with literature. This overview aimed at showing that, despite a constant acknowledgement the political dimensions of (some of) Glissant's work, scholars who defend the progressive nature of his politics, refrain from engaging with the political theoretical questions pertaining to what could count as political in his work. Discussing literary and stylistic decisions as separate from his activism and overtly political commentary, in my view runs the danger of occluding a larger part of what could be of political relevance in Glissant's work. My claim is therefore that a 'defence' of Glissant's politics would have to proceed from a *relational approach* that takes all of the above aspects into consideration and sets them in relation to one another.

From my point of view, what appears to be the singular 'scientific truth' in the academic reception of Glissant's work might be the reason for this limitation. In contrast to Glissant's own claim that he attempted to create a complete oeuvre, one that articulated itself from book to book, with essays, novels, poetry and theatre forming a whole (Baudot 1993, nr. 1340), there is general agreement among Glissant scholars today that his oeuvre can be separated into a before and after, a

⁷⁷ As another pertinent case in point, Elizabeth de Loughrey and George B. Handely (2011) look to Glissant as a means to 'dewesternise' the discipline of ecology. Referring to Glissant's concept of rhizomatic roots they consider Glissant's work as a means of bridging the "communication barrier between the postcolonial and ecocriticism", which they attribute to national frameworks of literary studies and a difficulty of reconciling poststructural methodologies with ecocritical models (20, 23).

chronology hinging on the publication of *Poétique de la Relation* in 1990. Curiously, a second consensus, which is equally supported by almost all scholars in the field is that Glissant's work, is characterised by a profound continuity or coherence. Indeed, concepts like *relation* and *la poétique* appear as early as *Intention Poétique* and reappear throughout all his subsequent essays. Aliocha Lasowski writes in that regard that *La Lézarde* already contains Glissant's whole oeuvre *à venir* (to come) (2015, 402), and Alexandre Leupin is astonished at the 'massive coherence and grace' of Glissant's work (2016, 12). This continuity, and the practice of repetition or variations on similar themes, is deliberately produced in Glissant's texts, who considered repetition to be a central device to be heard, and as a technique inspired by the oral tradition of storytelling. This alleged continuity across different genres could be considered a paradox, but is glossed over by most scholars who insist on the analytical virtues of systematic generalisation. Thus, the missing elements within the secondary literature taking Glissant's politics seriously are striking. In my reading, the image that emerges from the above study of the secondary literature dealing with the political aspects of Glissant's oeuvre is therefore reminiscent of an incomplete puzzle, a sense that is heightened by the observation that several works that do not take into consideration Glissant's publications pertaining to the very object of study: Obszýnski's study of manifestoes does not consider the very texts that fall into this genre, such as *Les Antilles et la Guyane à l'heure de la décolonisation* (1961), *Quand les murs tombent* (2007), *L'Intraitable beauté du monde – Adresse à Barack Obama* (2009), and the *Manifeste pour les 'produits' de haute nécessité* (2009). Roberts' study of Glissant's take on marronage (2015) does not engage with the main novels whose protagonist are maroons. Britton's book on the *Senses of Community* (2008) does not move beyond a study of *Le quatrième siècle* (1964) and glances over Glissant's work for the creation of a 'world community' as evoked in his monograph on Faulkner (1996), as well as the novels *Sartorius* and *Ormerod*. Likewise, de Loughrey and Handely's book on postcolonial ecology (2011) does not mention Glissant's own ecological project to transform Martinique into a *Pays biologique du monde*. These glaring omissions might be attributed to the fact that there is no congruent overview of Glissant's work, or as Barbara Diva Damato has suggested a general 'malaise' to continue reading his work because of its 'repetitiveness' (1995, 147-48). Several of the major studies published in recent times have therefore offered striking evidence for the possibility of acknowledging Glissant's politics while simultaneously disavowing it through the superficiality with which they treat their subject.

What I have referred to as the departmentalisation of Glissant's political activities is another case in point. Most studies propose a neat separation between his activism and his writing, or his political commentary from his literary works, to take 'the political' and 'the apolitical' apart. This is a stunning observation considering decades of post-structural critique against the separation of theory

and practice, of action and writing. The parts in his fiction that refer to his activism, for example his engagement in Césaire's electoral campaign in 1945 which served as the background for *La Lézarde*, or the interplay between his literary work on slavery and the project of actually institutionalising a museum for slavery in France would, for example, offer ample opportunities to explore the tensions or synergies between these genres of activity that might blur the borders of existing conceptions of political action.

Another defining characteristic emerging from my reading of the secondary literature on Glissant's politics is that it seems to take place in a vacuum of time and place. Most scholars writing on Glissant neither position themselves and the places they write from, nor do they consider the context in which Glissant's work was developed and where it could have political effects today.⁷⁸ This is particularly surprising coming from critics drawing on the work of Hallward, who attack him for the very 'placeless-ness' which they themselves endorse. A last observation concerns several important aspects within the corpus of Glissant's work itself, which have so far not received any attention in relation to Glissant's politics. The most important one among these for this study is, of course, the very notion of the 'politics of relation' to which no major study has been devoted so far. Although the interest driving this study is mainly informed by the considerations outlined at the onset of this introduction (1.1.), the biases identified in the secondary literature on Glissant significantly contribute to the approach adopted in this thesis.

This is not to say that there is not already a wealth of information produced on the political aspects of Glissant spread over several decades and across different disciplines. But collecting them and drawing their strands together remains an important work in its own right. As I have argued before and will substantiate more fully in the following section, this exercise requires an engagement with the question of whether it is possible to identify a set of political strategies across his work that *transcend* these isolated activities as a way of gaining a better sense of the particularities of Glissant's overall political project. My decision to study Glissant's work as whole, to pay attention to the intellectual and geopolitical contexts in which his thought emerged and to remain open to the possibility of a new conception of political action emerging from his work is based on these considerations. The ensuing section will outline how these findings translate into the methodological framework employed in the course of this work.

⁷⁸ See Debra L. Anderson's book *Decolonizing the Text – Glissantian Readings in Caribbean and African-American Literatures* for an elaborate discussion of this issue (1995).

1.4. Glissant's Philosophy of Relation – Method and Key Concepts

The general theoretical framework of this study is Glissant's philosophy of relation. The idea behind relying on Glissant's own philosophical elaborations to make sense of his political work, is not to present a *Glissantian study of Glissant*, that merely repeats or comments on how Glissant made sense of his own work. Instead it is meant to take his own views on the matter seriously to complement the most influential approaches in the secondary literature, as outlined in the previous section, that have read the political dimension of his work through the conceptual lens of others, thereby ignoring or merely glancing over Glissant's own understanding of the political dimension of his project. Although these studies deserve credit for pointing out how Glissant's work measures against existing standards of literary political actions, my own approach differs in so far as it seeks to explore its characteristics within a broader conception of the political (1.2.) which I deem necessary describe his political practice as comprehensively as possible. This requires a more thorough understanding of how his political practice relates to his general philosophical project.

In the opening section (1.4.1.) I present an overview of the position and conception of the politics of relation as it emerges in connection to the some of the main concepts of Glissant's philosophy of relation. Deriving what I have called a relational reading of Glissant's work from my engagement with his philosophy, I will outline my conceptions of the overlapping areas constituting the archive that I will be consulting in the course of this study in the following sub-section (1.4.2.). Instead of limiting myself to an engagement with Glissant's novels, essays, plays and poetry as separate genres, I will argue that working with the overlapping notions of fiction, life-writing, organisational action and abstract political thought provides a more fitting conceptual basis for a study of Glissant's politics and the different layers of 'visibility' on which it was performed. In the third sub-section (1.4.3.), I will make the case for the notion of marronage – which I conceive with Glissant as a historical and metaphorical line of flight from the plantation to the Tout-Monde –, as shaping the general direction of Glissant's politics, and as providing the overall structure for the individual chapters of my thesis.

1.4.1. Poetics and Politics in Glissant's Philosophy of Relation – Mapping a Field of Force

Glissant has pointed out on several occasions that his work around the notion of relation should not be understood as a theory in the conventional sense of a *systematic* approach to knowledge production geared towards *explaining* social phenomena. Instead he argued that his approach to knowledge would be better described as a poetics. In *Poétique de la Relation*, Glissant differentiated the two in the following way: “Poetics? Precisely this double thrust, being a theory that tries to conclude, a presence that concludes (presumes) nothing. Never one without the other.

That is how the instant and duration comfort us. Every poetics is a palliative for eternity” (PR 183). As this quote points out, the difference between poetics and theory is more than a discursive distancing from such currents as postcolonial theory. At its heart seems to lie the confrontation between a conception of theory that aims at understanding causes and effects, and strives towards fixed certainties, and a reality that is too elusive to be adequately 'captured' by such an approach. The result of this confrontation is a poetic approach to knowledge that is characterised by a sensibility for what Glissant called 'the living', the 'trembling of the world' and an aversion against singular truths or the gesture of 'grasping' (preface).

In addition to the overtly poetic characteristic of his work, towards the end of his life Glissant deliberately added the label philosophy to his overall project towards the end of his life when he published his last essay book under the title *Philosophie de la relation* (2009). Philosophy almost appears to be synonymous with his notion of poetics when he wrote, “*Qu'est-ce ainsi, une philosophie de la Relation? Un impossible, en tant qu'elle ne serait pas une poétique*”⁷⁹ (PHR 82). Providing his own understanding of philosophy in another paradoxical, or 'non-definitive definition' further below, Glissant asserted: “*nous appellerions une philosophie [...] un système non systématisé de tant de données aux conjonctions si dramatiques: la vitesse, les inextricables, cet inattendu, nous rattrapent, nous transportent*”⁸⁰ (PHR 82). Again, as with his descriptions of the poetic, Glissant refers to philosophy in an apparently self-contradicting fashion as a 'non-systematic system' that is apt at dealing with the inextricable, 'the unforeseeable that catches us and carries us away'. Instead of maintaining a clear distance between the object and subject of the study, the process of research in Glissant's philosophy has transformative potential that allows for open-ended back-and-forth exchanges. In the preface to this thesis I have outlined how a similar dynamic underlies my approach to mapping. Instead of seeking to explain particular phenomena, or prove a particular hypothesis correct, it is a method that tries to link the visible to the invisible, to create new forms of knowledge, one that leaves enough space to be quite certain but never 'entirely sure', which is in line with Glissant's mantra “*Rien est vrai tout est vivant*” (nothing is true, everything is alive), or the subtle difference between Glissant's usage of the verbs *deviser* (showing by imagining) and *diviser* (dividing to conquer) (UNRDM 57).⁸¹

Several Glissant scholars have heeded Glissant's advice and have warned against the attempt to systematise Glissant's oeuvre, and to turn his poetic work into a theory that can be applied to explain social phenomena anywhere. The same hesitation has been expressed with regards to

79 “So what is a philosophy of Relation? An impossibility if it is not a poetics”, my translation.

80 “We will call philosophy [...] a non-systematic system of the data deriving from so many dramatic conjunctions: speed, the inextricable, the unexpected, catching up with us, transporting us”, my translation.

81 In an analogy to these different epistemologies, Glissant has also proposed to contrast the abstract notion of a continent, and its sense of unity and certainty, with the fracturedness and inherent multiplicity of an archipelago (see 5.2.).

Glissant's understanding of his own political practice. Michael J. Dash has, for instance, argued that it would be impossible “to derive a systematic politics from Glissant's poetic and generously open-ended ideal of irreducible plurality and diversity for the Caribbean” (1995, 24). And indeed, an approach that turns Glissant's concepts into a classical analytical grid would risk missing the crucial thrust of philosophy, which is essentially tied to a commitment to open-ness, movement and unpredictability. However, as Alain Ménil has also acknowledged, scholars working with Glissant's philosophy do not have to be intimidated by the poetic fashion with which Glissant described his own approach to knowledge. As Ménil argues, the key concepts of his philosophy are not arranged in a chaotic fashion, but can be arranged in an order that would reveal the role they play in his overall philosophy – without disavowing or distorting their flexibility and mobility. If such a map of Glissant's concepts were drawn, in Ménil's view, the concept of relation would occupy a central place (2011, 87). Following Ménil's suggestion, my own interest in drawing up such a map is to try and identify the role Glissant's accorded to the politics of relation within the conceptual configuration of his philosophy. This preliminary analysis will allow me to pay closer attention to how other central notions of his thought are related to his political practice and, as I will argue in the course of this section, contribute to a re-centring his politics of relation as an integral part of his general project.

Less, More or Equal to? Glissant Politics and the Poetics of Relation

Several scholars who have paid closer attention to Glissant's own pronouncements on his politics have arrived at to the conclusion that it occupies *a less prominent or less important position* when compared to his notion of poetics. This view is mainly expressed with reference to isolated statements made by Glissant and not his work as a whole. Manuel Norvat has, for example, noted that “politics voluntarily remains in the background of his poetics”⁸² (2015, 258). Here, Norvat especially refers Glissant's statement that “writing does not serve the function of speeding up politics”⁸³ (258). Other statements by Glissant, such as his call to “avoid any reduction of literature to politics” (*éviter toute réduction de la littérature à la politique*) (EBR 60) could be read along similar lines. In most cases, these pronouncements suffice to put an end to academic debates interested in how Glissant himself positioned his project vis-à-vis his political project. The previous overview of different conceptions of politics and the political presented in 1.2., however invites a different reading of these statements. Bearing in mind the variety of conceptions of the political, these statements by Glissant could be read primarily as a rejection of a conventional political engagement of literature (1.2.1.). In other words, in these pronouncements Glissant merely insisted that he did not consider it to be the task of the poet to write up manifestoes for political parties or to

⁸²“*La politique s'autorise volontiers chez Glissant à être l'arrière-pensée de sa poétique*”, my translation.

⁸³“*L'écriture n'avait pas pour fonction de précipiter le politique*”, my translation.

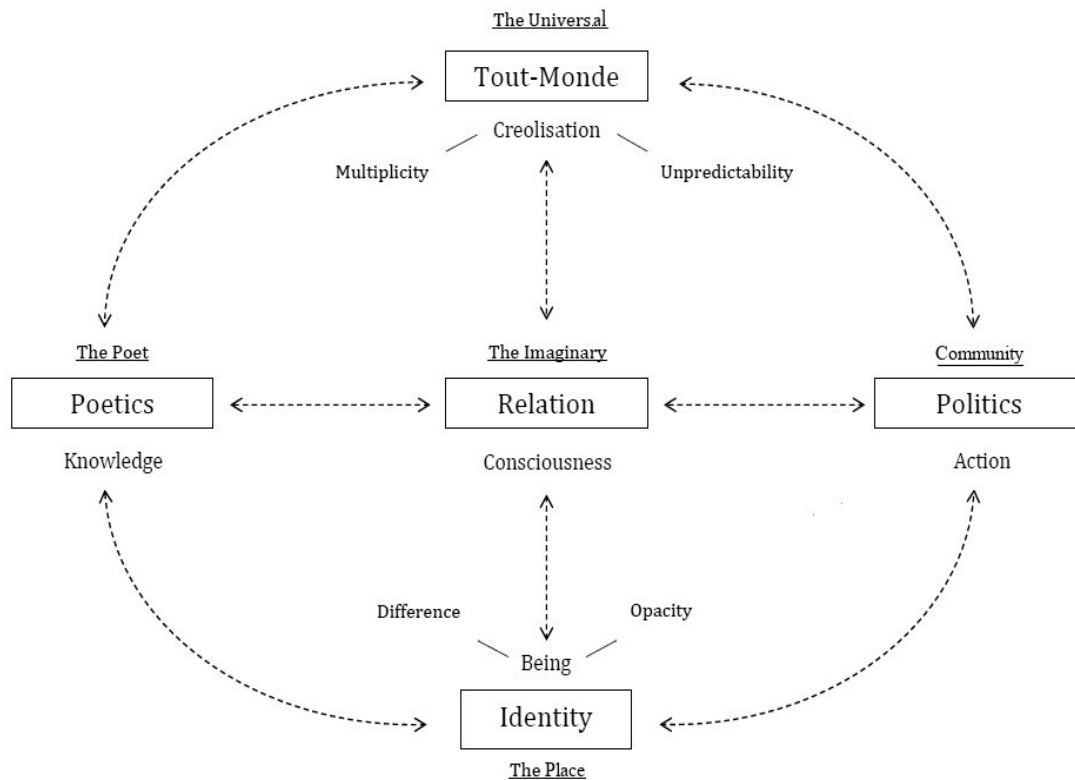


Illustration 1: Conceptual configuration around Glissant's imaginary of Relation

further the cause of a particular political movement by depicting it in a work of fiction. They seem to have little bearing on the broader conceptions of the political described in 1.2.2. and 1.2.3.

The possibility of reading the above statements by Glissant differently, that is, as provoking further scrutiny into the relation between his understanding of poetics and politics, can be confirmed by several other comments by him at various points in his work. In my view, they reveal a concerted attempt on Glissant's behalf to specify the way his conception of political actions functions in relation to other key concepts of his philosophy. In an interview with Philipp Artières titled *Solidaire et Solitaire* Glissant, for example, described the intricate connection between his conception of the 'world' and his poetic and political work:

*“S'agissant de poésie et de politique, je crois avoir toujours obéi à un instinct qui me portait d'abord à considérer que l'objet le plus haut de la poésie était le monde: le monde en devenir, le monde tel qu'il nous bouscule, le monde tel qu'il nous est obscur, le monde tel que nous voulons y entrer. En matière de politique, ma référence la plus haute était aussi le monde, non pas le monde conçu comme l'internationale des prolétaires, mais comme lieu de rencontre, de choc des cultures, des humanités”*⁸⁴ (Artières and Glissant 2003, 3).

84 “When it comes to poetry and politics I think I've always followed an instinct which led me to consider the world as the highest object of poetry, the world in its state of becoming, the world as it throws us over, the world as it remains obscure to us, the world we want to enter. Concerning politics, my highest point of reference was also the world, not the world conceived as the international proletariat, but as a meeting point, the shock between cultures and humanities”, my translation.

Instead of relegating the political to a lesser position or insisting on divorcing it from poetic work, Glissant in this quote associates them both equally with a particular conception of the world. This conception of the world is not shaped in a binary fashion – as in a Marxist ideology opposing a global bourgeoisie to a global working class –, but more 'chaotically' in that it is shaped by all the encounters of the cultures of the world. Statements like these, where Glissant clearly brings the political into conversation with the poetic, invite an exploration of other statements and the conceptual configurations they evoke. They, moreover, confirm the main intuition driving this work to learn more about the relationship between the poetics and politics of relation. In order to gain a better understanding of the dynamic between these two terms, I will pursue a classic line of analysis in the following by deriving a conceptual map from the reading of several exemplary statements made by Glissant through which the constellation of his key concepts becomes more apparent.

Mapping the Politics Within the Philosophy of Relation

In several statements concerning the interactions between poetics and politics more directly, Glissant has described their relationship in terms of succession or as having an effect on one another. This is for example evident in statements like the following: “*La première volonté de résistance aux effets des catastrophes, tellement profondément liés aux manoeuvres des tyrannies, est une poétique avant d’être une politique*”⁸⁵ (UNRDM 162), and “All poetics have implications for a general politics” (CD 187). That the influence can, however, also proceed in the opposite direction, from politics to poetics, or from politics to the world is shown in other passages, for instance in the letter to Barack Obama (2009) which Glissant co-authored with Patrick Chamoiseau and in which they both assert that Obama's election campaign serves as proof that “the politics of diversity is also a poetics” (*cette politique de la diversité est aussi une poétique*) (LIBM 6). Turning to Glissant's conceptions of identity and diversity, which are also central to his philosophy, one can identify their intricate connection to the notion of relation in passages such as the following, “*Naître au monde, c’est concevoir (vivre) enfin le monde comme relation: comme nécessité composée, réaction consentie, poétique (et non morale) d’altérité. Comme drame inaccompli de cette nécessité*”⁸⁶ (IP 21).

Instead of reading these expressions as denoting an indistinct assembly of thoughts where everything means or is somehow related to everything, I suggest that the general shape of the map emerging from these quotes could be seen as a field of force with the imaginary of relation at its centre. Circulating around this central 'catalyst', the field is organised along four main points of reference: Tout-Monde, identity, poetics and politics. These concepts have several points of

85 “The first will of resistance against the catastrophic effects linked to the manoeuvres of tyrannies is a poetics before it is a politics”, my translation.

86 “Being born in the world is to conceive (live) the world as relation: as a composed necessity, an agreed reaction, poetics (and not morality) of alterity. As the unaccomplished drama of this necessity”, my translation.

reference (the universe, the poet, the community, the place). Their significance for Glissant's overall project and for my study of his political practice will be briefly sketched in the following outline of key concepts. As I will argue throughout this section, working with this map of concepts allows for a novel appreciation of Glissant's political practice. While his political engagements have already been generally described as taking the form of a politics of resistance or a global ethics that is, quite generally, directed against the forces of neoliberal globalisation, racism and exclusionary nationalisms, the extent to which this political practice is intricately tied with his other concepts, allows for a radical re-reading of his politics of relation across the divisions of established genres of political action as well as those of different eras.

Creolisation – Tout-Monde – Mondiality – Alternative Visions of a Globalising World

As pointed out in the longer quote taken from Glissant's interview with Artières above, the world, perceived as Tout-Monde, or whole-world is the central point of reference for Glissant's poetic and political work. Throughout his work, he described his vision of the world as a seemingly paradoxical 'non-totalitarian totality' or a 'non-universal universalism' that is made up of an infinity of differences and is shaped by constant and unpredictable changes (TTM 22, 176, ATM 19).⁸⁷ For Glissant, the Tout-Monde is a historic novelty in the sense that, with the onset of the decolonial struggles, where the people and nations who were previously on the 'hidden side of the world' appeared on the world stage and expressed their visions of the world, the full extent of the world's cultural and historic diversity has become visible and can no longer be hidden by a colonial discourse of a singular world History, and the idea that there are only '5 continents, 4 races and 20 civilisations' (PHR 27). For the first time in human history, Glissant argued, it is no longer possible to remain ignorant of any part of the world, and that even without knowing all the world's languages, a writer "*écrit en présence de toutes les langues du monde*" (writes in the presence of all the world's languages), as he frequently asserted. Poets and travellers, immobile or mobile, have in Glissant's view been among the first actors to feel and see the Tout-Monde as, both, an emerging reality as well as something that still needed to be created.

The driving force behind the Tout-Monde, as well as behind Glissant's conception of world history more generally, is the process of creolisation. As a process, creolisation is, to some extent, delinked from the intentions of humankind as expressed in Glissant's formulation "*le monde se creolise*" (the world creolises itself) (IPD 15). For Glissant, the history of the world is thus the history of creolisation. Although Glissant first coined the notion explicitly in a Caribbean context, and in his first publications biological connotations of *métissage* were at times associated with it, Glissant eventually applied it in more abstract terms to the world at large, to the mixing of cultures,

⁸⁷ "*Le Tout-Monde, qui est totalisant, n'est pas (pour nous) total*" (The Tout-Monde, which is totalising, is not total (for us) (TTM 22).

and as a process that began through the violence of slavery and the harmonious modes of co-existence and entanglements that emerged out of it. For Glissant, the history of creolisation roughly began with Christopher Columbus 'discovery' of the Americas and is thus more than 500 years old. The agents of creolisation were both discoverers and discovered, colonised and colonisers who for the first time in history, created relations between different parts of the world, creating the 'fact' of relation that all parts of the world are related to one another. Creolisation does not have specific moral connotations, and rather neutrally denotes a world-historic process against which the fates and struggles of individuals and of political communities need to be understood.

Mondialité, mundiality, or worldliness in Manthia Diawara's translation (2010) is a term which Glissant developed towards the end of his life. If creolisation can be perceived as the driving force shaping the Tout-Monde, mundiality denotes the 'consciousnesses' of the Tout-Monde's existence, a profound awareness of 'all the differences of the world', between man and nature, cultures, communities and civilisations. Like the Tout-Monde, this consciousness is 'opposed to the mechanical effects of globalisation' (UNRDM 81). As Glissant wrote, it is “*pas une technique cachée des mécanismes à crans et de sourds soubresauts de l'investissement, mais un art et une intuition du mouvant et du global tels qu'elle les constitue elle-même, et dans lesquels il nous es donné de vivre et de créer*”⁸⁸ (UNRDM 150). The term mundiality also appears to be a response to a geopolitical shift Glissant remarked with regards to the 'forces of oppression'. No longer operating in a colonial or neocolonial manner and under the banner of national imperialisms, at the turn of the 21st century the 'enemy' increasingly appears to be coming from 'everywhere and nowhere' in Glissant's view, taking on invisible forms and thus becoming more difficult to identify (TTM 177). Mundiality thus continues on from where Glissant's left off with the notions of creolisation and Tout-Monde. Freed from the connotations of biological *métissage* and also referred to as “that which globalisation did not predict“, Manthia Diawara sees mundiality as referring to a changed frame of mind “less prone to discovery and conquest, and [...] where the communication between our intuitions knew no frontiers of language, territory, or power“ (2010). Associating mundiality with 'horizontal plenitude, regulated sharing, something that affects, offers, animates and fills, something that endorses the beauty of nothingness, gratuity, the gesture, the attitude, the thought' (Chamoiseau 2017, 55), it offers a way to re-think the world as one that is made up of different ecosystems that do and should balance each other out in an equilibrium (65) for Chamoiseau, thus a way of being in the world that is opposed to the ambition to expand, control and dominate associated with the capitalist logic of profit maximisation.

88 “not a hidden snap-on mechanism or the hidden deaf jolts of investment, but an art and an intuition of the movement and of the global, such as it is constituting it itself“, my translation.

Relaying – Linking – Imaginary – Relating All the Differences of the World

Glissant's work includes different descriptions of what the term Relation stands for. Instead of viewing them as succeeding or replacing one another, I prefer perceiving them side by side, thus acknowledging the multiple dimensions of the concept. Important to note for a political reading of this central Glissantian notion, Relation operates on different levels, pertaining both to the lives of individuals and collectives, as well as across spatial, temporal, visible and invisible dimensions. Its awareness of relations to all kinds of 'others' – be they animals, plants, cultures and humans (QLMT 25) – seeks to overcome established categories of social analysis and opens up the mind to a whirlwind of complexities that creates a sense of vertigo evoked in Glissant's definition of relation as “*la quantité réalisée de toutes les différences du monde, sans qu'on puisse en excepter une seule*”⁸⁹ (PHR 42).

As the main catalyst of Glissant's philosophy the imaginary of Relation ties all of his main concepts to one another. A relational consciousness allows individuals to relate to one another as well as to the natural world. On a collective level, it allows political communities, cultures and civilisations to conceive themselves as being constituted by diverse forces and not as homogenous entities, as well as being constituted through the interactions with those communities surrounding it.⁹⁰ Relation is also what allows poets to trace connections between different ideas and landscapes beyond the confines of geography and biological filiation, creating what Glissant called 'common-places' (*lieux-communs*) that constitute new imaginary homes for communities on local, regional and global levels. In an earlier description of Relation in *Poétique de la Relation* (1990), Glissant put less emphasis on its association with individual or collective consciousness, instead privileging its storytelling or narratological dimensions when he referred to it as that which “relays, links and relates all the elements of the world” (PR 187). Here, Relation is not yet written with a capital R⁹¹ and more strongly evokes the multiple meanings of the French word *relater*: relating stories, relaying, connecting, linking and translating, all of which are essentially literary activities. Literature, as the one human activity that allows people from vastly different times and places to relate particular imaginaries of the world to one another, thus has a particular standing in Glissant's relation. Important to note for an engagement with Glissant's sense of history, Relation in this

89 “The realised quantity of all the differences of the world, without leaving out a single one”, my translation.

90 Although the concept of Relation might evoke associations with other concepts that are based on relational ontologies, such as the notion of *ubuntu* (Ramose 2002), Glissant's Relation differs from prominent conceptualisations of *ubuntu* mainly by refraining from being translated into a set moral standard for inter-human behaviour or an adherence to a specific community. Although some passages in Glissant's fictional oeuvre could be interpreted as reproducing the image of a precolonial African village as the basis for a new postcolonial humanism which is frequently associated with *ubuntu* philosophy (see particularly 4.3.), it will become clear throughout this study, that Glissant's world-community still need to be created and mainly take on non-traditional forms of togetherness.

91 Throughout this study I maintain the spelling of Relation with a capital R to emphasise the centrality of the concept to Glissant's philosophy and to underscore Glissant's own conceptual shift towards this spelling.

description, also evokes a sense of 'bringing back' the past and passing it on (see chapter 2).

In a third, and more overtly political formulation, Relation comprises both conflictual and harmonious encounters between cultures. As a historical phenomenon that is at times used synonymously with creolisation, it is not identical with the values of tolerance, respect and understanding. Like the vision of the Tout-Monde, Glissant repeatedly insisted that Relation has no moral agenda (PR 145). Political problems do, however, arise for Glissant when relations are disavowed, be it in cultural, historical or geographic terms – thus whenever the sentiment arises that “we have nothing to do with them“, or “we were here first“, or “this is not (part of) our history“. The alleged 'immorality' of relation is also what brings the concept close to natural phenomena, such as the wind, birds, water, plants and the Caribbean fauna in particular. In line with these associations, Glissant repeatedly associated the concept with that of the 'living' or beauty. Beauty for Glissant was not to be confused with flawlessness, symmetry or smooth surfaces but referred to aspects that bring differences and diversity together. He wrote in this regard, for example, “*la beauté donne la force des différences qui dans le même temps s'accomplissent et déjà prédisent leur relation à d'autres différences*“⁹² (UNRDM 45). In addition to associating Relation with beauty, he also frequently connected it to notions of diversity, and what he called 'the living' (UNRDM 45), as virtues that a politics of relation needed to defend against the projects of 'the same', 'the One' or 'the dead' – of which neoliberal Globalisation was for Glissant the most recent incarnation (ATM 14).

Rhizomatic Identity – Consenting to Not Being a Singular Being

The notion of identity corresponding to Glissant's vision of the Tout-Monde is one that is not fixed to a particular geographical, ethnic or national sense of belonging. In a formula that Glissant repeated throughout his life he said: “*chaque variété ou chaque identité [...] vient à changer en elle-même en échangeant avec les autres, mais sans se perdre pourtant ni se dénaturer*”⁹³ (UNRDM 66). On a general level, Glissant's work on identity is tied to the aforementioned shift from an essentialist understanding of singular Being (*être*) to a changing state of 'being-as-being' (*étant*) or becoming. Opposing a rhizomatic conception of identity to a single-root identity, Glissant made the case, most prominently in *Poétique de la Relation*, that the former would allow for more peaceful engagements among individuals as well as collectives. Instead of relying on the conception of a 'family tree' in a strictly biological sense, or on national myths that trace the genealogy of contemporary nation-states to a homogenous cultural group – as in the infamous French promotion of the Gauls as the common ancestors of all peoples subjected to French colonialism –, and thus disavow the existence of any exchanges with other political communities over time, Glissant argued

92 “beauty infuses differences with power, which at the same time accomplish themselves and foretell their relation with other differences”, my translation.

93 “every difference or every identity [...] changes itself by exchanging with others without losing or denaturing itself”, my translation.

that conceiving of one's identity in rhizomatic terms would help avoid some of the most atrocious acts of violence committed in the 20th century. At stake with this conceptual shift, which risks being self-evident in cultural studies but is unfortunately still far from obvious in most popular national discourses, for Glissant are the dangers of 'ethnic conflicts' and genocides, such as in Bosnia and Rwanda (IPD 61). For the same reason, Glissant considered any attempt by nation-states to fix national identities, as Nicolas Sarkozy's government attempted to do in France in 2007, as not only destined to fail because identities are not fixed and cannot be prescribed, but the main factor towards the legitimization of exploitation of others (QLMT).

A rhizomatic identity is based on a relational ontology and acknowledges that 'who I am' is made of innumerable influences that shape an individual's subjectivity in unpredictable ways. One of the main consequences concerning the conception of collective identities is that 'changing by exchanging' is not a way of losing oneself, but of gaining wealth: "*Changer en échangeant c'est s'enrichir au haut sens du terme et non pas se perdre. Il en est ainsi pour un individu comme pour une nation*"⁹⁴ (QLMT 10). Due to the rhizomatic strands that make up a person's individuality it becomes impossible to ascertain it from the outside, according to markers of gender, race or class. It is something that can only be *created* by an individual. From *L'Intention poétique* to *Poétique de la Relation* he thus repeated several times: "As for my identity, I will take care of that myself" (PR 191). Almost half a century later, he reasserted the idea that any attempt geared towards measuring 'real' diversity on an identitarian level would have to take the imaginary as their point of reference, and not the complexion of a person's skin: "*La vraie diversité ne se trouve aujourd'hui que dans les imaginaires: la façon de se penser, de penser le monde, de se penser dans le monde, d'organiser ses principes d'existence et de choisir son sol natal. La même peau peut habiller des imaginaires différents*"⁹⁵ (QLMT 8). When Glissant spoke of how a person's specific location or place is '*incontournable*' this was thus not meant to confine the person's being to a specific geographic place, but to both take the immediate experience of the country and landscape shaping a person's sense of belonging seriously, as well as the more deterritorialized sense of belonging, and identity that is made up of all the rhizomatic influences that constitute an imaginary 'home' as well as the more abstract context he or she inhabits.

On a more fundamental level Glissant's understanding of the relation between the self and others begins with the acceptance of opacity as "*ce qu'un lieu oppose à un autre lieu comme liberté de sa relation*"⁹⁶ (UNRDM 187). Respect for the other's opacity is what protects a sense of diversity

94 "Changing by exchanging is to enrich oneself in the highest sense of the term, and not to lose oneself. This is the case for individuals as much as for a nation", my translation.

95 "True diversity can today only be found in the imaginary: the way one thinks of oneself, of the world, of one's place in the world, to order one's principles and to choose a home. The same skin can inhabit different imaginaries", my translation.

96 "what a place opposes to another place as the freedom of its relation", my translation.

that is characterised as the aforementioned 'way of thinking the world' (QLMT 15-16). While the acceptance of the other's opacity is the precondition for developing an imaginary of relation, its opposite, the belief in the necessity of transparency and the possibility to explain everything that remains unknown, be it a person or the ways of nature, effectively prevent this world-view. For this reason, Glissant associated a respect for an other persons opacity with an anti-racist stance: “a person has the right to be opaque. That doesn't stop me from liking that person, it doesn't stop me from working with him, hanging out with him, etc. A racist is someone who refuses what he doesn't understand. I can accept what I don't understand” (Diawara and Glissant 2011, 14). In contrast to psychoanalytical approaches, Glissant thus posits that, on a fundamental level, we do not know what is behind our actions and desires, and those of others. This does, of course, not preclude the possibility of trying to find out more about the other and about one self, but it prevents the idea that a sense of certainty awaits at the end of that search.

A Politics of Relation – Still to be Imagined

As I began pointing out above, there is enough 'evidence' in Glissant's essays to suggest that what he called a politics of relation has to go *hand in hand*, or to *be in close interaction* with a poetics of relation. The quotations listed at the onset of this section strongly suggested that there is no hierarchy between them. Instead they influence and enrich one another. In an immediate sense, the relation between poetics and politics in Glissant's work could thus refer to *two different modes* with which an imaginary of relation and awareness of the Tout-Monde, is being expressed: in writing or in actions. Although several passages in Glissant's work seem to confirm this separation along different forms, modes or media,⁹⁷ as I will show later on, the division between them is more difficult to ascertain maintain than it appears.

Despite the growing frequency with which Glissant mentioned the notion of politics of relation towards the end of his life, its precise contents remained unspecified. As he pointed out at several points, and specifically with regards to the way that nation-states like France and the US fashioned their internal and external policies towards the issue of migration: “*Pas un programme N'envisage une véritable politique de la Relation, la reconnaissance ouverte des différences*”⁹⁸ (UNRDM 84). The politics of relation thus remains to be imagined. In line with the arguments presented in 1.2.3., a few of his statements can be interpreted in such a way that it becomes clear that when Glissant referred to politics it was not limited to a conventional interventions in a prescribed political arena, but that it encompasses all of those actions that concern the fundamental political question who is part of a particular political community. In contrast to traditional

97 Glissant himself often referred to a 'narrow' or commonly held view of the political, when he, for example, refers to the figure of the political *homme d'action*, a 'man of action', exemplified by Fanon, in opposition to the poet, or the 'visionary politician' (Mandela, Obama), the social movement and the collective of poets (*International Parliament of Writers*, see 4.4.2.).

98 “Not one programme envisions a true politics of relation, the open acknowledgement of differences”, my translation.

definitions of politics that rely on the existence of an established and separate political field, Glissant seemed to insist that other modes of actions should be considered as being of political importance. Both 'small' and 'big' acts have to be considered as being politically significant, as becomes apparent when he wrote with Patrick Chamoiseau:

*“Le moindre mouvement vers la complexité, une chanson, un poème, le tressaillement d'un peuple, exalte infiniment le tout et fait liaison avec le plus petit détail. La conscience s'élargit. L'imaginaire s'étend. Alors cette conscience du Tout-Monde s'élargit. L'imaginaire s'étend. Alors cette conscience du Tout-monde demande à être déclarée, ou reconnue, en termes de politiques et de poétiques”*⁹⁹
(LIBM 23).

Expressions like these move his political commitments into a poetic or utopian realm that both prevents it from being confined by 'practical' or 'realistic' considerations, but also precludes it from being further explored as part of initiatives that are interested in bringing about changes in concrete institutional set-ups. The passage in *Poétique de la Relation*, which I have cited in the preface, can be taken up here as a way of gaining more insight into Glissant's own reasoning about the importance of political thought: “How can one reconcile the hard line inherent in any politics and the questioning essential to any relation? [...] Widespread consent to specific opacities is the most straightforward equivalent of nonbarbarism” (PR 194). This assertion about a politics dedicated to a 'civilising mission' of a different kind, could be read as the guideline for a different kind of politics, a politics of relation, that insists on the confrontational or antagonistic aspect of a politics of 'friends and foes' (1.2.1.), while *also* insisting on a cultural relativism that resists the temptation to speak about politics in a singular fashion, in the sense of upholding a singular political model as a universally applicable standard. In addition to the classical analytical approach pursued above, where I read Glissant's personal statements about politics, this perception of the politics of relation suggests the possibility to study Glissant's own work through the lens of such a political mode, which will form the main line of inquiry pursued throughout this thesis.

In sum, re-reading Glissant's own writings and statements with an eye for how he positioned his key philosophical concepts in relation to politics of relation, has not only produced a conceptual map in which his political practice can be placed at the very centre, and in close interaction with some of his other concepts. It has also revealed that, while Glissant insisted on the importance to develop, invent, create or imagine a politics of relation that would be inspired by or attuned to a poetics of relation, the details of such a project were not spelled out by Glissant. In the absence of a comprehensive list of examples Glissant cited as embodiments of a politics of relation, and due to the apparent limitations of analysing the dispersed comments made by Glissant about politics, my

⁹⁹ “The smallest movement towards complexity, a song, a poem, the action of a people exalts everything and is connected to the smallest detail. The conscience extends. The imaginary grows. The consciousness of the Tout-Monde demands to be expressed and recognised, politically and poetically“, my translation.

approach is to aim at describing Glissant's political practice as a politics of relation and to gauge in what ways it could apply to inspire other political practices. The following sub-section will outline the method and archive I will be consulting in this process.

1.4.2. Studying Glissant's Political Archive – Bringing Fiction, Life-Writing, Organisational Action and Abstract Political Thought into Relation

The preliminary analysis undertaken in this introduction suggests that it would not be enough to study Glissant's poetical and political work apart from one another, nor would it make sense to study it in isolated pieces defined by literary genres or specific time periods. Aiming towards a more comprehensive view of everything that could be of relevance as part of Glissant's political practice, in line with the broader conceptions of the political presented in 1.2., in the context of this thesis it makes sense to read his oeuvre *as a whole*, transversally, or *relationally*, that is *across* conventional divisions of activism and literature, his early and later works, his essays and novels, or his interest in local and global political issues. Pursuing this line of research is not meant to suggest that 'everything is connected to everything' or that 'everything is political' in Glissant's work. Although Glissant's work is not organised in a pyramidal fashion, where one stone is placed on another towards a final apex, and rather takes the form of an archipelago, where each publication can be read as an island on its own, as well as being in an invisible (submarine) relation with others, his oeuvre is not without direction. In order to get a sense of this general direction, my argument is that one has to be sensitive to the potentially political dimensions of all aspects of his work. Instead of approaching his work along the established categories of novels, essays, theatre plays and poetry, or along the lines of activism, political commentary and political aspects of his style of writing, I suggest of different analytical categories to denote the parts constituting what I consider as Glissant's 'political archive'.

As I pointed out in section 1.3., predominant approaches to Glissant's political work tend to *separate* different modes of political action in *impermeable* boxes from one another. In cases where connections between these categories received further attention, this was mainly geared towards finding out which political issues preoccupied Glissant at a particular point in time, or whether his lived activism was in accordance with his theories. The main concern was thus with questions of *coherence*, *representation* or *comparison*. Instead of exploring this direction further, my own research proposes to work with an archive that is made of four overlapping and highly permeable modes of political activity that I differentiate roughly as fiction, life-writing, organisational action and abstract political thought, with one of the main interests of this study being the way these different political modes *support*, *strengthen* or *re-enforce* one another. This is done in the awareness that the founding of a political organisation, the creation of an educational institution, the

publication of a manifesto, a chapter in a novel, or a line in a poem, could be placed at vastly different points on a scale of political action as much as they could be considered equally political. Bearing in mind the discussions in section 1.2., these actions could vary from discursive interventions in governmental affairs to the invention of a new phrase, word or sign geared towards intervening in the 'distribution of the sensible' (Rancière). Instead of arguing that all modes of political actions are equal, either in their relevance, visibility or their 'effectiveness', the approach I am proposing remains similarly interested in all of them based on the assumption that the shift from one plane of political action to another, from the textual to the extra-textual or the invisible to the visible, accords Glissant's political practice the potential to reinscribe the same struggle into a different dimension, to keep it alive or to transform it and adjust its direction to changing contexts.

A sense of how these various political moves were performed in the long run will enable me to identify the general direction, and the main characteristics of Glissant's politics of relation. By hypothetically attributing this politics of relation to Glissant's own political practice, despite his own reluctance to speak of his work in this term, my approach thus diverts from Glissant's own pronouncements and writings on the question of the political, as analysed in 1.4.1., and seeks to describe it through the lens of a concept he proposed without elaborating on its contents. In order to justify the choice of material and method of study allowing me to pursue this route, I will in the following explain in greater detail what I consider to be the different modes of political activity that make up Glissant's political archive and how I will read them in the course of this study.

Fiction

A first body of work this study interrogates as part of Glissant's political archive can be referred to as fictional. Fiction is here understood in a conventional sense as referring to writing concerning imagined events or people. The specific importance of the fictional part of Glissant's political archive is due to the specific characteristics which the realm of fiction accords Glissant's politics, namely providing it with *the greatest space for the experimentation and expression of a relational imagination*. Not tied to personal experience (life-writing), extra-textual activities and organisational actions, or engagements with theoretical discussions (abstract political thought), the *'literary field'* is a site of primary importance for Glissant's political practice because it allows for the exploration of political alternatives that are not tied to practical or material considerations. Importantly, these political actions can move into the non-fictional realm through processes such as transcendence, translation or transformation. Although I consider the field of fiction to provide Glissant with specific political possibilities, it is important to reiterate, that it cannot be read in isolation but that the synergies it creates with other modes of political action need to be considered.

Due to the fuzzy nature of the life-writing concept, which I will outline below, the borders between fiction and life-writing are not clear cut. One can never be certain as to how much 'self-referentiality' can be attributed to Glissant's fictional characters. It is also not evident to what extent they are 'imagined', or in how far they take up themes or figures from historical sources. Referring to a part of Glissant's political archive as fictional does, however, suggest a significant difference from labelling this part of his political archive as 'literature', 'imaginative political writing' or 'novelistic'. If literature is understood in a broad sense as 'any written expression or manifestation of thought – the products being considered as a collective body' (Poggioli quoted in Okolo 2007, 11). This conception is so vast that it can include all forms of writing and action that are 'manifestations of thought'. I would also like to differentiate the corpus forming part of Glissant's fiction from the kind of 'political imaginative writing', MSC Okolo is interested in (2007). As I pointed out above, the fiction I consider to be part of Glissant's political practice is not the same as 'political literature' in a conventional sense of directly engaging with concrete issues of governance, authority, justice and equality – although several of Glissant's novels can be read in this way. While maintaining a view that Glissant's imaginative writing is invested in an ethical project of 'raising social consciousness', 'challenging traditional views and offering prophetic insights into human life' or acting as an instrument of revolution,¹⁰⁰ I argue that Glissant's fictional work *does politics in a different way*, in a different geography and on a different time-scale than the one employed by the first generation of Afro-Caribbean writers that were directly implicated in the postcolonial nation-building efforts (see also 1.2.3.). For that reason, my interest in his fictional work goes beyond its immediate stance vis-à-vis a set of political problems.

The category of the novel also does not adequately capture the specificity of Glissant's fictional work, since the books carrying this label also repeatedly contain passages of poetry, or theoretical elaborations, just as much as his essays also contain novelistic passages and poetry. This practice is in line with Glissant's stated disregard for established genres. In conversation with Claude Couffon dismissively referred to them as 'marketing schemes':

*“je ne crois pas aux genres littéraires dans le monde d'aujourd'hui. Cette distinction en genres littéraires, qui a été prodigieuse pour la littérature française, me paraît caduque. Parce que les choses viennent de partout à la fois et, à mon avis, on ne peut pas figer tout ce flux qui nous arrive dans des formes trop contraignantes de genres littéraires. Peut-être même en inventera-t-on de nouvelles.”*¹⁰¹
(Couffon and Glissant 2001, 36).

100 For Okolo “literature is a force that can be used for definite social purposes, acting as an instrument of revolution by challenging and compelling us to take a second look at things that we may hitherto have taken for granted“ (2007, 18).

101 “I do not believe in literary genres in the contemporary world. The distinction among literary genres, which has been prodigious for French literature appears void of significance to me. Because in my point of view the things come from everywhere at the same time, you cannot freeze all of this flux in such constraining forms as literary genres. Perhaps we will even end up inventing new genres altogether”, my translation.

The disregard for genre boundaries, the practice of breaking genre boundaries by mixing or creolising them, has been remarked by several Glissant scholars as one of Glissant's main characteristics, and of several Caribbean writers of his generation. Despite the 'authorised' reaffirmation of the division of his work into works of poetry, novels, essays and theatre plays with the republication of his oeuvre by the publisher *Gallimard*, the way he worked with these genres warrant to be interrogated in its own right. Although, as pointed out earlier, Glissant considered himself to be constructing a complete oeuvre, his essays for example provide traces or points of orientation that allow his readers to not get lost in his experimental way of writing in some of the novels and his poetry. Paying closer attention to how Glissant's fictional work is part of or intersects with his larger political practice warrants not only a focus on the more overtly political concerns expressed in the contents and themes of his novels but *also* on the politics of style. The layers of literary analysis this study needs to engage therefore range all the way from the general concerns or main themes of individual novels, to their style and structure, the characters and their relations to one another, questions pertaining to the narrative voice and perspectives guiding particular narratives, up to the importance of individual letters or hidden symbols in the written text. Instead of taking these relationships as remaining on the level of representation, metaphor or analogy, I argue that taking the interaction between fictional content and style seriously provokes an interest in the question of how fiction can be transformed into non-fiction. By referring to a movement from the textual to the extra-textual realm in this manner, I am not concerned with the extent to which Glissant's fictional writings were *consistent* with his actions or his theories, for the sake of demonstrating a total coherence. Neither am I concerned with questions pertaining to the representation of extra-textual actions/biographical elements/historical events in his fictional work. Moreover, I am not attempting to distill the biographical from the fictional, or to separate the 'life' from the 'writing', in order to discern how much reality informed his fiction. I am mainly interested in the sphere where his work of fiction *actually attempts to do something* that has repercussions in the imaginary *and* non-fictional or physical realm. Notions such as 'creating', 'establishing', 'making visible' or 're-inscribing' will thus play a greater role in this context. As will become clear, the impact of what I consider to be a *transformative energy* can differ from large to small effects, the degree of which will inform the selection of examples I rely on in this study.

Life-Writing and Performance

In contrast to a modern scientific approach that would divorce the body from the mind, lived experience from theory, I understand Glissant's philosophy of relation to be based on the assumption that life and writing cannot be divorced from one another. Closer engagement with Glissant's politics thus warrants a reconsideration of how 'life' and 'writing' are intertwined in

complex ways, no longer as two distinct parts. This also implies that the borders between the fictional and the biographic, between the fictional and the autobiographic, as well as between fiction and non-fiction become less easy to draw, and that any claim to an 'authoritative biography' becomes destabilised. As a way of engaging this complex entanglement around the practice of self-referential writing, the work of Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson in the field of autobiography studies, specifically on the notion of life-writing, is instructive.

As Smith and Watson point out in *Reading Autobiography – A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (2010), postmodern and postcolonial critics have for some time criticised the concept of autobiography for its 'politics of exclusion' (2-3), an exclusion that can be identified in the way the genre celebrates Western notions of individuality, elitism, and more complex ways of writing ones own or somebody else's life through oral or material traces for example. As a way of working against this problematic tradition, Smith and Watson propose the notion of life-writing, "as more inclusive of the heterogeneity of self-referential practices", which they define as "a general term for writing that takes a life, one's own or another's, as its subject. Such writing can be biographical, novelistic, historical, or explicitly self-referential and therefore autobiographical"(4).¹⁰²

Instead of being confined to *complete singular narratives*, life-writing practices could, for Smith and Watson, be considered as more *selective or fragmented social actions* that project *multiple histories*, including those of entire communities of people (18). Instead of claiming neutrality as narratives that represent objective facts, "self life writing 'encode(s) or reinforce(s) particular values in ways that may shape culture and history'" (Miller quoted in Smith and Watson, 18-19). In contrast to the practice of historians or biographers who tend to place themselves outside or at the margin of the events or individuals they describe, or autobiographical subjects who place themselves at the centre of the stories they assemble, the position of a life-writer is less easy to discern due the *mélange* of historical, fictional and biographical forms of writing (13-14). Distinguishing between biography, autobiography, fiction and life writing becomes a complicated if not impossible matter through this lens. More importantly, if one takes the claim seriously that the particular political potential of life writing is that it *reinforces particular ways of being in ways that may shape politics, culture and history* the main scholarly point of interest is not to disentangle the fictional from the non-fictional but to ask *what a particular practice of life-writing does*, more so than how accurate it is. On the other hand, this does not have to mean that life-writing practices have to remain indistinguishable from fiction. While it becomes difficult to *clearly* identify life-

¹⁰²The notion of life-writing as proposed by Watson and Smith can be seen in the context of other concepts such as the term 'new biography' (2010, 9), 'autobiografication' (Stephen Reynolds), or 'ficioneering' in Frank Kermode's reference to J.M. Coetzee's style of writing (15), or what Audre Lorde called 'biomythography' in relation to her book *Zami – A new spelling of my name* (1982). In contrast to these approaches, Maryse Condé has taken issue with the practice of mythifying people's life in her book *La vie sans fards* (2012).

writing practices, Watson and Smith argue one could for example try to distinguish them by depending on the 'vital statistics' of a subject such as birth date, locations, and educational training (11). More importantly than searching for overlaps between real and fictional characters with a view on this kind of 'basic data', Smith and Watson argue that what distinguishes life-writing from fictional texts is that they “inevitably refer to the world beyond the text, the world that is the ground of the narrator's lived experience, even if that ground is in part composed of cultural myths, dreams, fantasies, and subjective memories or problematized by the mode of its telling” (12).

In line with Glissant's own perception of truth as essentially multiple and unstable, Smith and Watson also underline that the difference between traditional understanding of truth and lie tends to not matter in life-writing as much, since “autobiographical truth resides in the intersubjective exchange between narrator and reader aimed at producing a shared understanding of the meaning of a life” (16). As I will explore throughout this thesis, this exchange between author and reader produces an extra-textual effect that can have distinct political qualities. What is included in the narrative of a life and what is not, what is remembered or forgotten, also takes on a political dimension, as Smith and Watson write: “We are always fragmented in time, taking a particular or provisional perspective on the moving target of our pasts, addressing multiple and disparate audiences. Perhaps, then, it is more helpful to approach autobiographical telling as a performative act” (61).

These entanglements of individual and collective acts of life-writing and performance play an important role in my study of Glissant's political archive. The notion of performance not only links back to Rancière's privileging of *how* political actions are performed over its stated objective. Antonio Benitez-Rojo also writes about the politics of aesthetics as 'a certain kind of way', “something that reproduces itself and that carries the desire to sublimate apocalypse and violence; something obscure that comes from the performance and that one makes his own in a very special way; concretely it takes away the space that separates the onlooker from the participant” (16). What Benitez-Rojo observes about the importance of performance and rhythm for Caribbean cultures, as a practice eliminating the separation between 'onlooker and participant' also carries meaning for the domain of literary production and Glissant's political practice. As will become apparent, I read certain aspects of Glissant's performance as deliberately geared towards eliminating the border between author and reader. My understanding of performance corresponding to this practice refers to the embodiment of an abstract thought that involves a deliberate engagement with a larger audience.¹⁰³

In Glissant's case, the performative aspect thus suggests an additional dimension of life-

¹⁰³I employ performance in a conventional sense and thus distinct from Fred Moten's elaborate theorisations of black performance and non-performance in *Stolen Life* (2018) (5.1.3.).

writing that goes into a somewhat different direction than the ones outlined by Smith and Watson. These practices concern questions about how particular actions or experiences gain in particular value through the way they are embodied in real life and in literary representation. This is not meant to imply that Glissant lived his life so that he or others could write about it. Being aware of the complex dynamics between writing and life, as forming part of the poet's politics, not only evokes the possibility of *curating* or *cultivating* lived experiences as in the genre of the biography. In more important terms, it also carries the potential of *re-inscribing lived actions into text*, as a way of creating an archive in which these actions can live on beyond the biological life of a person. After introducing the conceptual lens through which Glissant's life-writing practice will be studied, I will now briefly introduce the material that becomes relevant from this angle.

In line with Smith and Watson, Glissant acknowledged that he had invented, re-transcribed, and reimagined most of the autobiographical elements in his fictional work in line with his mantra, that “nothing is true, everything is alive. All lives are dreamed-up” (*Rien n'est vrai, tout est vivant! Les vies sont toujours rêvées*) (Noudelmann 2018, 9). Nevertheless, François Noudelmann, a friend of Glissant and long time director of the *Institut du Tout Monde*, which Glissant had established in Paris in 2006, assembled the fragments of Glissant's life in the form of a biography titled *Édouard Glissant – L'identité généreuse* (2018) and published in the series *Grandes Biographies* by Flammarion. The book undertakes to sketch the vast canvas of Glissant's trajectory and relations, while still leaving significant room for interpretation as to the factual accuracy of this account of Glissant's life. While some episodes in the biography are attributed to oral sources, others take the form of unverifiable legends or accounts that are even contradicted by some of the people involved, thus re-emphasising how Glissant explicitly worked to blur the distinction between life and writing. Some of the statements attributed to Glissant by Noudelmann can serve as fitting illustrations for how Glissant *performed* his life in such a way as to place his own life into a larger, world-historic, context. In one of his first interviews with a French television channel in the early 1950s, he for instance spoke about his crossing of the Atlantic, in a journey from Martinique to Paris, as an inversion of Christoph Columbus' trajectory in an expression he repeatedly used, “*C'est Christoph Colomb qui était parti pour ce qu'on appelait le nouveau monde, et c'est moi, je suis revenu*”¹⁰⁴, an expression that he repeated towards the end of his life in the documentary *One World in Relation* (2009). In the making of the same film, which can itself be considered to be perhaps the most prominent performance of Glissant's life-writing, he suggested to the film director Manthia Diawara, “if he were I, he'd wait until we were in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, and point the camera at the mass of water, its abyssal expanse. That would be the whole film in one shot, for him”

104“Christopher Columbus left for what was called the New World and I am the one to return from it”, my translation.

(2010). Expressions such as these reveal the complex entanglement of self-referential 'writing' practices by Glissant, that are then taken up by others who produce biographical accounts of him. In these instances it becomes impossible to discern what is biography, what is autobiography, and who the subject and who the object of these self-referential statements really is or was. Moreover, the practice of *life-writing turns into a collective practice*, in which an entire community is engaged. In Glissant's case, this community of friends and colleagues gathered around Glissant's philosophic project with the goal of advancing its popularity. I will address the political implications of these kinds of performances and life-writing practices at various points throughout my study.

In concrete terms, Noudelmann's work, together with various self-referential fragments of Glissant's novels, essays and interviews will provide the life-writing part of the archive I am investigating. It is important to emphasise that I do not refer to Noudelmann's book as an authoritative account of Glissant's life. Not only does the biography repeatedly leave it unclear who speaks and from whose perspective the account of Glissant's life was produced. The book also contains lengthy passages that I deem problematic from the perspective of my approach towards Glissant's oeuvre. Whereas my area of interest is in line with Glissant's reading of the work of William Faulkner, to whose private life he expressed a pronounced disinterest in his monograph (1996), Noudelmann writes at length about the personal aspects of Glissant's life, such as his eating habits, his romantic and family relationships or physical ailments, evoking a sense of embarrassment (Céry 2018), Noudelmann's book remains, of now, the most useful resource for scholars interested in what Watson and Smith call the author's 'vital statistics', as well as (the collective practice around) his self-stylization and performance as an intellectual. More so than an accurate account of Glissant's life, I therefore suggest to approach Noudelmann's book as *an account* of Glissant's life to which Glissant *to some extent actively* contributed. The performance or self-stylization outlined by Noudelmann can be seen as needs to be seen as forming part of Glissant's oeuvre and not as an accident or purely subjective work on Noudelmann's part.¹⁰⁵

In practical terms, the concept of life-writing and the material that I am engaging with, results in the question as to *how the written records of parts of his lived experiences (real or imagined)* form part of, enhance or transform some of the political strategies he pursued in Glissant's lifetime. The material that is of interest is thus both what Glissant said or wrote about himself, what he told others about himself as well as what others say about Glissant based on what he said or wrote. A set of his fictional texts in which Glissant's life is referred to in direct or indirect ways (such as through what Watson and Smith call his vital statistics), is also of relevance in that

¹⁰⁵In a review of Noudelmann's biography, the Martinican writer Raphaël Confiant writes that the book's portrayal of Glissant's performance are convincing. While he consents that several passages in *Édouard Glissant – L'identité genéreuse* are problematic, he perceives them to be in line or at least not incoherent with the self-stylisation Glissant practiced among his peers (2018).

regard. The fictional character of Mathieu has, in this respect, been read as being to some extent modelled along Glissant. In addition to seeing Mathieu, as well as fictional characters like Mycéa and Thaël as representations of his concepts or his general ideas, or as autobiographical accounts of Glissant's own life (Dash 1995, 7) I therefore propose to work with them both as 'feedback loops for his political practice' (Gallagher 2008, 11) that enable Glissant to explore the strengths and weaknesses of his politics in another realm (chapter 3.3.).

Organisational Action

I refer to a third type of practice constituting Glissant's political archive as 'organisational action'. This material archive overlaps significantly with what the secondary literature lists as his various initiatives or activist engagements throughout his life. Since this list is to some extent derived from Glissant's life-writing practice, thus from the information he chose to divulge about his overt political intervention, another overlap can be seen with the field of life-writing outlined above. The specificity of Glissant's organisational action is that it *seeks to leave visible traces in the political landscape in which it intervenes*. In cases where these actions have heeded a degree of success, the traces they left are visible to this day, in other cases less so. In all cases, however, these actions, be they textual or non-textual, discursive or material, intervene directly in an established political system conventionally understood (1.2.1.). These interventions can aim at changing this system, but not exclusively so. They could just as well be geared towards carving out a space *inside* it that would allow for the creation of imaginary spaces *outside* it. They could also appear as *symbolic* actions or actions that take the form of *monuments*, reminders or inspirations for future generations to continue a particular line of political struggle.

Pertinent examples of such 'actions' range from Glissant's co-founding of the FAGA in 1961, the manifesto against the French Ministry for Identity (QLMT); the letter celebrating the election victory of Barack Obama (LIBM); *the manifesto* in support of the social movements in French Guiana and associated islands (MPHN); the project proposal by Glissant to turn Martinique into a '*pays biologique du monde*' (TTM, UNRDM); the draft for a new education system based on the teaching of a different history and the introduction of creole (LDA); the project proposal for the establishment of a museum for the memory of slavery in France (ME); the manifesto to establish 20 May as a national holiday in France (*May 10*, UNRDM); the argument for a *Martinican Museum of American Arts*, M2A2 (LCDL); the celebration of the *International Parliament of Writers* (TTM) and its political ramifications. In each case, the boundary between activism and writing blurs since literary activity here is not only conceptualised as political action but also calls for more actions. Some of these initiatives were covered by mainstream newspapers, some of the institutions are still in place, others have 'failed', have never materialised, or are 'in ruins'. In all cases, there are *traces*

outside Glissant's writings themselves that are proof that 'something has happened here'.

In addition to the images and writings produced around these actions, the genre of text that is of particular interest in the context of this aspect of his archive is the manifesto and the public letter, which is in itself defined as a political intervention in writing. Michał Obszyński, in his *Manifestes et programmes littéraires aux Caraïbes francophones* (2016), has begun to study the importance of the manifesto format in Glissant's writing.¹⁰⁶ In terms of Glissant's overall political practice, but also with regards to more specific strategies he used in his life, it remains to be addressed how these kinds of expressions relate to Glissant's other political activities. Instead of pointing out whether Glissant was politically engaged in his lifetime, the question becomes how these practices form part of a larger project. To which specific issues do they respond? What specific concerns are expressed in it? Which political priorities come to light in them? What conceptions of the political lies at their basis or is shaped through them? And what does it mean for Glissant to repeatedly use the form of the 'letter to the president' in *Quand les murs tombent* and the *Adresse à Barack Obama* against the background of the previous outline of the characteristics of the poet's politics?

Abstract Political Thought

A last body of work that I consider to be constitutive for the archive I will engage in my study of Glissant's politics can be referred to as abstract political thought. The material falling under this heading is abstract in that it seeks to deduct an attempt to address specific political questions of a given time and place from Glissant's experience, fictional experiments and the lessons derived from concrete actions in. As my analysis will show, in Glissant's case these questions are political in the sense that they address the issue of *who* constitutes a community, *how* this community is internally constituted, and *how* it relates to others. Referring back to the overview of Rancière's conception of the political presented in 1.2.2., these questions are part of the founding pillars of philosophical reflections when Rancière writes that political philosophy is “theorizing about community and its purpose, about law and its foundation” (1999, vii). For Glissant, these reflections appear most prominently in the context of theoretical debates around national decolonial projects but also on concrete issues like national immigration policies or theoretical debates on democracy. By using the phrase 'thought' for this kind of practice, and not theory, I do not mean to place it on an inferior position, but – apart from respecting Glissant's own reluctance to see his philosophy transformed into a theory, as signalled earlier – this serves to emphasise that all parts of Glissant's political archive have theoretical implications. Fiction, life-writing and organisational action do

¹⁰⁶In a striking omission pointed out in 1.3.3., Obszyński does not discuss the actual manifestoes co-written by Glissant: *Les antilles et la Guyane à l'heure de la décolonisation* (1961), *Quand les murs tombent* (2007), *Adresse à Barack Obama* (2009), and the *Manifeste pour les 'produits' de haute nécessité* (2009).

theory in that sense. Not in the sense of searching for explanations based on a dichotomy between facts and values modelled on the natural sciences, but as a reflection about the state of political communities and explicit propositions as to which institutions, which criteria for social actions will serve mankind best (Okolo 2007, 23)

The bulk of the material I consider to express Glissant's abstract thought on political matters can be found in his essays. As I have already remarked about Glissant's use of the novel format, Glissant's essays do not adhere to a conventional form. Instead of sketching out or following a particular line of argument, they are made up of accumulations of images and concepts, transcribed speeches, re-worked articles and project proposals, poems and quotes from his other texts. The technique of repetition or variation on similar themes plays a central role in the essays in producing the effect of densely interconnected webs of cross-references through which a set of concepts creates a path that serves as orientation for the reader. The essay as a genre has been identified as a particularly productive space in the Caribbean more generally. George Lamming's opinion that it presented an "occasion for speaking" (quoted in Yow 2001, 330), also hints at the fact that it breaks down the distinction between the oral presentation and the written work. It also points to a more collective way of working when, in *Le discours antillais* for instance, parts contain transcriptions of discussions of members of the *Institut martiniquais d'études*, pointing out the necessity of reading it as the result of everyday intellectual conversation and collaboration in a period spanning over a decade, rather than the 'work of genius' of a single author.¹⁰⁷

In light of the relative openness of Glissant's essays, an exclusive focus on this particular genre might thus miss important contributions to this mode of his political practice in the genres of life-writing, interviews and other oral communications, as well as in his novels and works of theatre. Thoughts on abstract political questions can, in this sense, be expressed in reference to Glissant's own life experience, or expressed by some of the fictional characters in his novels or theatre plays. Paying close attention to passages in his oeuvre where Glissant abstracts from his own political ideas about specific contexts towards more general historical dynamics, will be an important step towards setting his political practice into conversation with other debates taking place in the realm of political theory (see chapter 5 in particular). Moreover, taking Glissant seriously as a *political thinker*, and thus as more than a political commentator or a political writer implies also a shift away from limiting political theoretical debates to disciplinary discourse of political theorists and opening it up to the 'poets' as interlocutors of equal relevance who, in Glissant's view, need to be repositioned from the periphery to the very heart of deliberations in the polis (5.4.).

¹⁰⁷For these reasons it is particularly unfortunate that these passages were excluded from Dash's translation (1999).

In sum, my approach to the study of Glissant's politics considers these four different fields or modes of practice as constituting a political archive with which it becomes possible to different strategies as well as the overall direction of Glissant's political work. Read together and across Glissant's life and work, my claim is that these different modes of political action render the general characteristics and direction of his politics visible. I consider neither of these four different modes superior to over or clearly separate from another. They all accord his political practice with different potentials that warrant to be further explored in the course of this thesis. Despite their egalitarian nature, it is unlikely that they have been employed randomly by Glissant. The question thus becomes, what do these different political practices share in common? What is their underlying direction? Put differently, with the archive and the method forming the basis of this study in place, how can one describe Glissant's politics of relation in such a way that it does not appear as an incoherent chaos? The following section addresses this question by making the case that the movement of marronage, both as an historic phenomenon as well as an abstract concept, offers a lens that is suited for a description of the overall direction and main characteristics of Glissant's politics of relation.

1.4.3. Giving Direction to Glissant's Politics of Relation – The Movement of Marronage as Conceptual Lens

The general structure of this study differs from the approaches presented in 1.3. in that I propose to read Glissant's political practice through a singular conceptual lens, namely as a movement of marronage. Before I will elaborate on my understanding of marronage and why I consider it particularly apt at capturing the main thrust of Glissant's political practice, I would like to briefly outline the reasoning for reducing Glissant's politics to a singular direction and several issues at stake with this decision.

The main intention behind this attribution is that, in contrast to works that re-emphasise the archipelagic and relational nature of Glissant's work, marronage evokes *an unequivocal decolonial political direction*. This is in line with what I have identified as the general decolonial concern of Glissant's notion of the political as forming part of the black radical tradition (1.2.3.). Framing Glissant's political practice in this manner thus goes against its interpretation by Hallward as a 'less than fully' committed political practice that relegates the political dimension of Glissant's work to a 'cultural' or 'identitarian' in preoccupation. It is also a decision that aims at – and this is of particular importance with regards to intellectual efforts that are interested in placing Glissant's philosophy in the canon the of Western philosophical tradition (Leupin 2016) –, placing Glissant in a larger political tradition that is (rhizomatically) rooted in a particular geographic space and time: the five century long struggle of black liberation being fought in the Caribbean, the Americas and Africa.

Lastly, by proposing to read Glissant's politics of relation through the lens of marronage, my aim is not to compete with the portrayals of his Martinican predecessors by casting Glissant as 'more radical than others', a concern that is at times implicit in the attribution of the maroon label to Caribbean artists and intellectuals.¹⁰⁸ Instead of contributing to a categorisation or hierarchisation around the notion of the intellectual maroon my interest is more descriptive or analytical in the sense that it enquires what become visible about Glissant's political practice when it is seen as taking the form of a movement of marronage? Bearing these preliminary considerations in mind, I will in the following describe the understanding of marronage underlying this thesis, and outline the ways in which it operates as the general framework for my description of Glissant's political practice in a more concrete fashion.

Neither Master Nor Slave – The Historic and Metaphorical Figure of the Maroon

As a world-historic phenomenon, maroons escaped from the confinement of the plantation, alone or with others, for longer or shorter periods of time, fled into the hills risking lethal punishment, where they sought to survive, create a new life or even a new community that would be structured along radically different norms than the slave society from which they fled. As a theoretical figure abstracted from this concrete historical phenomenon the maroon therefore be seen presents a *third position* in the 'master-slave dialectic' famously theorised by Hegel and reformulated by Fanon.¹⁰⁹ Instead of being bound up in a struggle for recognition with the *white* master, who defines the slave as *black*, the maroon falls outside of this binary, seeking to create a new identity and a new community following the violent uprootment (*déracinement*) brought about by the slave trade.¹¹⁰ As historical records prove, the identity of this community was creole in nature, as it was infused by a diversity of cultures – among them Indigenous, African, European and Indian – that met in both violent and harmonious encounters in the Caribbean since the arrival of Europeans and the onset of the transatlantic slave trade.

Spelled differently depending on where in the Americas maroons are being referred to, the *nègre marron*, *nèg mawon*, maroon, runaway, fugitive or rebel slave,¹¹¹ features as a prominent point of reference in Glissant's novels, essays, theatre plays and poems. For the most part, Glissant's

108 Whereas Maryse Condé has, for example, made the case that Fanon was the key representative of a 'maroon civilisation' in Francophone Caribbean literature, based on the radical rupture he performed from the French colonial project by moving onto the 'other side', of the Algerian liberation movement (1976, part 3), Yarimar Bonilla makes the case that Césaire's work can be read as a kind of marronage because of its radical creolisation of the French language (Bonilla 2015, 49 see also 4.2.3.).

109 See the section on *The Negro and Hegel* in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* (2008, 168-70).

110 As an abstract theoretical figure, the maroon also breaks with the political dichotomy of the field and house slaves proposed by Malcolm X, where the house slave works *with* the master, and the field slave *against* the master (1963). In contrast to this inside-outside logic, Glissant's maroon occupies another realm that stands outside this political division, next to it, rather than above it, in 'appositional' rather than oppositional terms (also see 6.3.).

111 Neil Roberts points out that the term 'maroon' derives "from the vocabulary of indigenous Arawaks and Tainos in the Caribbean. The Spanish word *cimarrón* developed on the island of Hispaniola in reference initially to Spanish colonialists' feral cattle, which fled to the hills, then to enslaved Amerindians seeking refuge in those areas, and ultimately (by the early 1530s) to enslaved Africans seeking escape from chattel slavery beyond plantation boundaries." (Roberts 2015, 5). For a discussion of the etymology of the term also see Richard Price (1979, 1-2), and Dénètem Touam Bona (2016a, 5).

maroons are modelled on the historical phenomenon of *marronage* (marronnage, maroonage, maronage), a history said to begin more than 500 years ago in Hispaniola and reaching a supposed end with the abolition of slavery (Price 1973, 1). The location of the communities created by maroons varied from being situated just outside the border of the plantation's territory, to being removed from it as far as possible, on the hills and the highest mountains of an island or a region. Some of these communities lasted less than a year and were only made up of a few members. Others comprised a population of several thousands and are still in existence today (1). Against the negation or trivialisation of marronage in colonial historiography, Richard Price, in his ground-laying study *Maroon Societies* (1973), argues that these communities “stood out as an heroic challenge to white authority, and as the living proof of the existence of a slave consciousness that refused to be limited by the whites' conception or manipulation of it” (2).

Although Glissant directly engaged with the complex history of marronage, and its myriad variations across the archipelago and the continent, some of the acts of flight he described as marronage were also chronologically removed from its 'proper historic context'. The specific political quality of these less historic acts of flight is only made apparent once their historical and cultural embeddedness in maroon traditions are revealed. Among Glissant's theoretical engagements with marronage, *Le discours antillais* (1981) has been most frequently cited as the text in which Glissant discussed the importance of marronage in the specific context of Martinique. In this comprehensive collection of essays, he directly critiqued its misrepresentation in colonial historiography with the intention of promoting a heroic figure around which a Pan-Caribbean identity, which he at the time called Antillanité, could be created. This identity was meant to serve as the basis for the political project of a Caribbean federation. A central quote in that regard, which has not been translated in the English version of *Le discours antillais*, reads as follows:

“nous ne le soulignerons jamais assez, que le Nègre marron est le seul vrai héros populaire des Antilles, dont les effroyables supplices qui marquaient sa capture donnent la mesure du courage et de la détermination. Il y a là une exemple incontestable d'opposition systématique, de refus total”¹¹² (LDA 104).

The maroon is here deliberately turned into a mythical figure that promises to function as a *lieu-commun* (common-place) for fostering of a Pan-Caribbean identity. Following Glissant's shift in focus from regional to global political issues in the early the 1990s, marronage still featured strongly in his theoretical writings. It, however, increasingly took on abstract or metaphorical qualities. In *Poétique de la Relation*, for instance, Glissant referred to Caribbean literary traditions as a more general tradition of 'creative marronage':

¹¹²“we never emphasise this enough, that the *nègre marron* is the only true popular hero of the Antillean, the horrendous torture that marked his capture indicates the degree of courage and determination at stake. Here is an incontestable example of systematic opposition, of complete refusal”, my translation.

“So, finally, historical *marronage* intensified over time to exert a creative *marronage*, whose numerous forms of expression began to form the basis for a continuity. Which made it no longer possible to consider these literatures as exotic appendages of a French, Spanish, or English literary corpus; rather, they entered suddenly, with the force of a tradition that they built themselves, into the relation of cultures” (PR 71).

Against the view that the tradition of marronage came to an end with the official abolition of slavery, Glissant argued in this quote that it intensified by moving into different realm. No longer confined to the physical flight into the hills, it moved into the cultural realm, particularly into literary production. This view, that the historical experience of marronage lives on in the cultural realm, by presumably being ingrained in the collective sub-conscious, is at the basis of my claim to speak of Glissant's political practice as belonging to a larger tradition of intellectual marronage.

All Things Rebellious? The Currency of Metaphorical Marronage

The strong resonance of marronage, as a movement signifying a shift from a state of unfreedom to freedom, has led to it being re-inscribed into what could be called a larger decolonial archive of strategies of resistance. As Yarimar Bonilla points out in her book *Non-Sovereign Futures* (2015), the historical practice of marronage not only contested the system of slavery across the Americas, but also allocated a central place for the rebel slave in the political imagination of the Americas (41-42). As she points out, “maroons are still imagined as artful political subjects, able to challenge the institutional and categorical confines of their society [...] marronage thus represents the hope and evokes the possibility of transcending the epistemic limits of one's place and time” (43).

A glance across the different usages of the term in contemporary scholarly and activist work reveals its employment in a vast array of debates. The notion of marronage is, arguably most frequently, being deployed in debates around race-based social inequalities produced by a capitalist economic system, a system that is not only metaphorically equated to the colonial plantation in popular culture, but also identified as having strong genealogical connections with slavery, to such a degree that the decision to withdraw from the labour market has been cast as a form of contemporary marronage (Moulier-Boutang 1998). The relevance of these metaphorical associations between marronage and the contemporary neoliberal system of globalisation can be strengthened by pointing out the complex historic entanglements between the plantation system and early forms of capitalism. Built on slave labour, racialised hierarchies, export orientation and the use of scientific methods geared towards the maximization of productivity, the plantation system has by many scholars been identified as being at the basis of the development of industrial capitalism. Sidney W. Mintz makes this point in *Sweetness and Power – The place of Sugar in Modern History*:

“What made the early plantation system agro-industrial was the combination of agriculture and processing under one authority: discipline was probably its first essential feature. This was because neither mill nor field could be separately (independently) productive. Second was the organization of the labor force itself, part skilled, part unskilled, and organized in terms of the plantation's overall productive goals. [...] Third, the system was time-conscious. This time-consciousness was dictated by the nature of the sugar cane and its processing requirements, but it permeated all phases of plantation life and accorded well with the emphasis on time that was later to become a central feature of capitalist industry” (1986, 47).¹¹³

Benitez Rojo in *Repeating Island* (1996) has made the similar argument that the Plantation 'machine', “capitalized to indicate not just the presence of plantations but also the type of society that results from their use and abuse”, produced not only millions of slave but also led to the emergence of the following phenomena:

“mercantile capitalism, industrial capitalism (see Eric Williams *Capitalism and Slavery*), African underdevelopment (see Walter Rodney *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*), Caribbean population (see Ramiro Guerra *Sugar and Society in the Caribbean*); they produced imperialism, wars, colonial blocs, rebellions, repressions, sugar islands, runaway slave settlements, air and naval bases, revolutions of all sorts” (8).

If the main modes underlying the historic functionings of the plantation are still in existence today, and have only been transformed and adapted to the contemporary moment,¹¹⁴ marronage promises to be an effective mode of resistance against this system or machine in Benitez Rojo's sense.¹¹⁵ As an example of an academic field that explicitly employs the notion of marronage, one could point to the tradition of *Black Studies*, which Fred Moten describes as a practice of “refusing that which has been refused to you” (5.1.4.). Speaking about the direction his own intellectual line of flight is taking, Moten in conversation with Saidiya Hartman says that – instead of upholding a dichotomy between the inside and the outside of the hold of the slave ship, which can again analogously stand interchangeably for capitalism, the biopolitical nation-state, liberal political thought or whiteness – “I have been trying to think of living out from the outside, or out, so to speak, of that inside-outside opposition” (Moten and Hartman 2018, 46). Moten refers to this positionality as the 'black outdoors' or a 'meta out', which indirectly links back to my own claim about the maroon signifying a *third positionality* in relation to the slave and the master, black and white.

In the Caribbean context, the figure of the maroon has moreover been used for a wide range

113I thank Heinrich Wilke for pointing out this quote by Sidney W. Mintz and for sharing his thoughts on this issue with me.

114Among the many possible allusions to the continuation of the plantation system in transnational black culture consider for instance the song *Slave Mill* by *Damian Marley* (2017): “what you want and what you will / working for your dollar bill / sad to see the old slave mill is grinding slow but grinding still / nine to five you know the drill / weekends are a short-lived thrill / sad to see the old slave mill / is grinding slow, but grinding still / come put it over till it spill / take until they've had their fill / sad to see the old slave mill / is grinding slow but grinding still.”

115Benitez Rojo points out that he borrows the notion of the machine from Deleuze and Guattari (1996, 6).

of political projects, from the espousal of the maroon as national symbols in Jamaica and Haiti, to the description of trade union strategies exercised against the French state in Guadeloupe (Bonilla 2015, 41-42), the politics of 'strategic entanglement' with the French state associated with Aimé Césaire (49), or the representation of the maroon as an apolitical 'gangster' in popular media, such as the film *Nèg Maron* by Jean-Claude Barny (2005). While all of these usages are testimony to the metaphorical currency of slavery, and to the relevance the historical movement has as a concept to make sense of present political situations, as Lukas, one of Yarimar Bonilla's interlocutors, points out, once marronage is rid of its contextual and political specificities, it can denote any act of flight or escape, any kind of resistance or simply 'all things rebellious' (2015, 57).

Glissant's Marronage as a Political Move(ment)

Bearing in mind this note of caution against conceptions of marronage that are too general to be meaningful for either abstract deliberations or concrete political action, my own approach in this thesis employs a specific use of the term that draws on Glissant's conceptualisation. As I will argue across the chapters of this thesis, the physical traces and imagined incarnations of marronage can be seen serving as a central point of reference for Glissant's politics of relation. I am therefore suggesting that Glissant's political practice can itself be considered as a practice of intellectual marronage. By referring to it as a practice (both textual and non-textual), I would like to point out that I perceive to be more of an intuitive movement, with all political implications of these terms, rather than a fully articulated ideology, a clearly thought-out strategy or a manoeuvre with a set goal in mind. Privileging the option of flight away from a hostile political environment over the option of fighting against a dominant political adversary, so choosing *flight over fight*, can in part be attributed to a particular context of domination, as implied by a passage in *Le discours antillais*:

“because domination (favored by dispersion and transplantation) produces the worst kind of change, which is that it provides, on its own, models of resistance to the stranglehold it has imposed, thus short-circuiting resistance while making it possible. With the consequence that meaningless know-how will encourage the illusion of universal transcendence. A relocated people struggles against all of this” (CD 29).

As a mode of resistance, marronage needs to be seen as a response to a specific political problem of domination anchored in the concrete experience of slavery, is how I read this quote by Glissant. In my understanding of this statement, both the strengths and weakness of marronage as a political model are thereby constituted by this larger general political configuration. In other words, without a plantation system, without masters and slaves, marronage becomes superfluous. In a similar way in which I have drawn the link between the plantation system and neoliberal capitalism, one can draw parallels between the historic and more contemporary forms of domination that have resulted from the transplantation effected by the transatlantic slave trade. In his essay *Toward and*

Aesthetics of the Epistemologies of the South (Twenty-two Theses) (2019) Boaventura de Sousa Santos argued that, globally speaking, capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy dominate our contemporary world in an interconnected fashion. For Santos, the weakness of modes of resistance against these forms of domination, which would have to be more closely analysed in their specific local and intersectional appearances, has been in their tendency to single out one of these forms instead of all of them:

“As a consequence, anti-capitalist struggles have often been colonialist, racist and sexist in character, while anti-colonialist or anti-racial struggles have often condoned capitalism and hetero-patriarchy, and anti-patriarchal struggles have often been capitalist and colonialist or racist in character. The tragedy of our time is that domination operates as a coordinated totality while resistance against it is fragmented” (2019, 131).

As he analyses, this kind of domination is based on a 'eurocentric civilizational paradigm' more than on a particular economic or political model (132). “By ignoring the underlying articulation among the three main forms of domination, these epistemologies contribute to disarm social resistance against them” (132), Santos continues in a formulation that reiterates Glissant's argument earlier. In the face of the re-emergence of the most brutal forms of exploitation, Santos makes the case that we need to find alternatives to this 'nightmarish status quo that thrives on destroying life, both human and non-human' by exploring what he calls an “alternative thinking of alternatives” (133). As a mode of resistance that emerged against the Eurocentric epistemology and its materialisation that the movement of marronage becomes an attractive mode of exploring these 'alternative alternatives' to avoid the kind of short-circuiting bemoaned by Santos and Glissant.

By positing Glissant's own political practice of marronage as *intuitive and strategic* I am not implying that it should be seen as 'irrational' or 'erratic', but that it is based on a deeper historical and cultural repertoire of political actions that are available in times of political conflict. By referring to it as the 'most effective' or 'least dangerous' political option, I am not implying that it should be considered as merely reactive or the 'easiest way out'. The escape from an annihilating social system such as slavery was not only an excruciatingly horrifying experience, as both historical documents and their literary interpretations testify.¹¹⁶ The possibility of creating new communities on the basis of this flight was also an essentially *creative*, or 'poetic', act, one with significant theoretical consequences for the way we think about political conflict resolution as well as the set-up of political communities more generally. In a nutshell, the central assumption behind describing Glissant's political practice as a movement of marronage is that it shares the three main characteristics that I have identified in this sub-section: (i) an aspect of resistance to the plantation system understood in a broader sense which is both historically and metaphorically related to

116 See for instance Patrick Chamoiseau *Slave Old Man* (2018).

slavery, (ii) an aspect of creativity that I have primarily focussed on with regards to its investment in the creation of communities, and (iii) a concern with the invention of a different kind of humanism that differs from that upheld by the Enlightenment paradigm and relied on a subjectification of a large part of humanity into the category of less-than-fully-human.

In line with the method outlined in the previous two sub-sections, reading Glissant's politics of relation through the lens of marronage means this study not only engages with will the role of marronage in any of the genres he employed, but across the different categories I introduced as constituting his political archive. What Glissant wrote or said about marronage will, therefore, also be supplemented with a set of textual or extra-textual practices that *I consider as belonging to his political practice of marronage*. Since Glissant's own engagements with marronage in writing grant particular insight into his conception of the term, this part of his archive will receive particular attention in my study. In contrast to his abstract statements on marronage, which can particularly be found in *Le discours antillais*, Glissant's fictional oeuvre is less known for, and less overt in its engagements with marronage. It is however also marked by an extensive treatment of the maroon, both as a historical and as an abstract political figure. This is specifically the case in the two novels *Le quatrième siècle* (1964) and *Ormerod* (2003) – which will feature most prominently among the fictional texts studied in this thesis for this very reason –, and to a lesser extent in *La case du commandeur* (1981) and *Mahagony* (1987). The centrality and mostly positive connotations Glissant attached to his maroon protagonists, particularly in his first novels *La Lézarde* (1958) and *Le quatrième siècle* (1964), have been criticized by some scholars as 'romantic' or 'chauvinist' in their portrayal of male fierceness and bravery, but also as marking a fundamental break from the marginality and negative representation of the maroon as a dangerous criminal or scary 'boogeyman' prevalent in literary works on the Caribbean up until the 1960s (Bonilla 2015, 46). These kinds of analysis are in line with the prevalent trends in literary studies of these novels. By and large, they focus on whether Glissant's portrayal and conceptualisation of marronage is positive or negative (Noudelmann 2018, 203), whether it is depicted as productive or futile modes of political action or community building (Roberts 2015, 141, Britton 2008, 36), and how it compares to existing historical accounts of marronage and other movements of anti-colonial resistance before and after the official abolition of slavery in Martinique (Burton 1997, 79-80). While the insights gained from these approaches are important to consider, my own approach differs from them in so far as it is primarily interested in the following three questions: What *conception of marronage* arises from Glissant's fictional oeuvre? In how far can Glissant's fictional work on marronage be considered as constituting a *political practice of marronage* in itself, extending into the extra-textual (non-fictional) dimension? And, most importantly, in what ways do the maroon characteristics of his

work *form part of his politics of relation*? In a final instance, this line of inquiry will allow me to abstract from Glissant's conception of marronage, as it shapes his overall politics, in order to bring it into conversation with other debates in political theory. By reading Glissant's political work through the prism of marronage, one of my arguments will be that different literary elements cannot be analysed separately from one another, but have to be brought into relation, if one wants to get a sense of how Glissant's fiction *performed* a specific kind of marronage in his life and work.

Thesis Structure – The Main Directions of Glissant's Marronage

The general structure of this thesis is broadly arranged according to the three main directions of flight that I identify in my reading of Glissant's political archive. My argument in this regard is that, Glissant's practice of intellectual fugitivity refers to different abstract lines of flight that overlap significantly and operate on temporal, spatial, conceptual and epistemological levels, tracing a movement of flight into the past to recover modes of action for the present/future (chapter 2), a movement of flight from the confines of the plantation to the Tout-Monde (chapter 3), and from individual isolation to a new sense of community (chapter 4). Once the conceptualisation of marronage and the corresponding depiction of political practice emerging from Glissant's oeuvre have been established, another chapter will be devoted to engaging political theoretical debates associated with the Glissant's practice of marronage on a more abstract level (chapter 5).

Approaching Glissant's conception and practice of marronage through the identification of several distinct directions that constitute its main characteristics, owes in part to the premise that any line of flight can be described as moving *from* somewhere *to* somewhere else. This neither means that its movement is one-directional or proceeding in a straight line from point A to B, nor does it imply that a 'goal', however nebulous it might be, is eventually being attained. Writing about marronage and Glissant in terms of directions most drastically diverts from Richard E. Burton's reading of marronage in Glissant's novels as being increasingly devoid of any direction at all, of failing to actually escape from the plantation system, or as 'turning endlessly around itself' (1997, 99).

Running across the three main lines of flight, to which I dedicate an individual chapter each, is an additional movement of marronage that I perceive to be operating mainly on an epistemological level, one that is concerned with a shift from a binaric and oppositional world view towards a relational imaginary (1.4.1.). The point to emphasise in this regard is that, in line with his general philosophy, Glissant was committed to the overcoming of several key binaries that were central to the colonial enterprise, and ways of knowing integral to the Western enlightenment tradition. In terms of describing this shift in the production of knowledge as a kind of *marronage* – and thus distinct from more general terms such as flight –, my claim is that this direction marks a

movement *away from* the very ontological basis on which the colonising project and the plantation system have been constructed, and which has been produced as a 'Manichean world' populated by binary oppositions as decolonial writers have pointed out with reference to the work of Frantz Fanon. Moving away from this way of seeing the world, does not only have to be perceived as a rejection of the modern Western project, but as an attempt of *moving towards* a different way of being and knowing that proposes a less or even non-violent relation between humans and non-humans in distinction from the dominant Eurocentric paradigm criticised by Santos (2019). In line with my understanding of marronage as being inherently concerned with the creation of a different understanding of what it means to be fully human, Glissant's marronage thus promises to offer a way of exploring the 'alternative thinking about alternative' Santos invites us to explore.

In terms of the different aspects of Glissant's archive outlined above (1.4.2.), the sections of the individual chapters study a mixture of materials, thus bypassing a neat division along established genres. Nevertheless, a general shift in focus across chapter 2 to 4 proceeds from what I have described as a dynamic that shifts from more opaque and text-based to more visible and extra-textual forms of political practices. Individual summaries at the end of each section and chapter are designed as 'islands' that collect the main insights derived from the respective parts of this study in a concentrated fashion, at times also discussing individual aspects or pointing out issues that warrant to be taken up at a later point. While the general narrative of this study at times anticipates the main findings of this research to provide the reader with a sense of direction of the overall inquiry, the brief stop-overs of these summaries are also intended to support the processual nature of this work.

Chapter 2:

Fleeing into the Past to Imagine the Future

A Marronage Into Time

2.0. Chapter Introduction

At an early stage of Glissant's literary career, literary scholars that a central concern in his work was a critical engagement with the colonial narrative of Caribbean history, a preoccupation that became particularly apparent with the publication of *Le quatrième siècle* (1964) (Baudot 1993, nr. 652, 655, 656). By taking up the 'problem of the past', Glissant worked on a theme that was shared by many Caribbean writers of his generation (Condé 1976, 161). Debra Anderson interprets the particularity of this concern in a Caribbean context by remarking, “through literature the writer helps the community to resolve its conflicts and clarify its vision of the past, present and future by opening up the wounds of history and exposing the human condition in all its anguish, folly, and triumph” (1995, 102). Accordingly, for Glissant, the “writer is a decoloniser who, through his symbolic reclaiming of history, revalidation of suppressed cultures and repossession of the land, restores to his people a historical and cultural identity and possibilities of the future” (23).

A particularity of Glissant's representation of Caribbean history, which several scholars noted, was that it did not depict the agents of history in simplistic terms of good and bad. Instead Glissant's main ambition appeared to be to depict, with the greatest degree of complexity, the relations and entanglements of social actors, leading to a 'chaotic whirlwind' of stories that some scholars have signalled as potentially problematic from a postcolonial political point of view. Jeannie Suk has, for example, questioned how the 'disorder' in Glissant's fiction comes dangerously close to an unintentional apology for the slave trade in its attempt at reconstructing an absent, opaque Martinican history (2009, 70). Suk states in that regard that, “Glissant walks a difficult tightrope: his bold, nuanced position is not as politically straightforward as the oppositional resistance associated with *négritude*, Afrocentrism and nationalism” (82). This scepticism towards Glissant's engagement with history has also been shared by Maryse Condé, who finds that by “not privileging anything, not prescribing anything, restituting a history that has never been collectively experience other than as a 'battle without witnesses’”¹¹⁷ (1976, 162) Glissant's fictional rendition of the past renders it useless for concrete political struggles and confined to a small elitist readership of intellectuals due to its opaque style of writing (162-68).

Approaching Glissant's engagement with history from a different angle than the above mentioned scholars, the main interest of this chapter is in Glissant's engagement with marronage as a historical phenomenon, and in the question how far Glissant's mode of historiography could be perceived as taking the form of a marronage into the past.

As outlined in the introduction (1.4.3.) I consider marronage to be a particularly apt notion

¹¹⁷“ne rien privilégier, de ne rien prescrire, de restituer une histoire jamais vécue collectivement mais 'comme un combat sans témoins’”, my translation.

to describe the overall direction of Glissant's politics of relation and the political tradition to which it belongs. The centrality of marronage in my thesis alone demands a more expansive introduction of marronage as a historical phenomenon as well as the academic debates that have sprung up around it. The first section (2.1.) of this chapter will address this issue. Presenting the historical context from which marronage emerged and its representation in historical scholarship is, however, not meant as an end in itself. While it can, at times, be interesting to fathom to what extent Glissant worked with or against certain historical facts concerning marronage, or his engagement with what Neil Roberts calls 'historicist discourse'¹¹⁸ on marronage, its main relevance for this study lies in the fact that it can be considered as *the point of departure for Glissant's own conceptualisation and practice of marronage*, in fictional, abstract and embodied forms. Moreover, Glissant's engagement with the history of the Caribbean is not one-directional in the sense that he drew political inspiration from it as an archive of decolonial resistance, – although, as I will argue, this in itself needs to be seen as an important aspect of his politics of relation. Re-writing history in the form of what Glissant called a '*mythe fondateur*' (founding myth) or 'epic' in itself constitutes a political practice that is geared towards establishing a new kind of community, as I will emphasise in the ensuing deliberations on the concepts employed in this chapter.

By placing a pronounced emphasis on the discursive foundations of political communities, and on whether these founding narratives are inclusive or exclusive, open to or averse to the diversity of the Tout-Monde, Glissant reconceptualised the political role of 'poets' vis-à-vis their communities. In general terms, the discursive aspect of Glissant's political practice and his strong commitment to history, relates to Alasdair MacIntyre's claim that human identities can be perceived to be essentially narrative based, or that 'we are the history that we are told' (quoted in Rosa et al. 2010, 99). This also implies that, in the absence of identity-building narratives, communities risk falling apart and for a 'diffusion of identity' to take place, something that has been cast as a sense of 'alienation', 'rootlessness' or 'disequilibrium' by Glissant, Césaire and Fanon in their descriptions of the Antillean people. The view implicit in these social diagnosis, points to the political importance of the ways in which the histories of political communities are being told, for instance in school and university curricula. As I will outline in the following, these questions are not of secondary but of essential political importance for a Glissantian political practice.

Before I proceed to substantiate my proposition of reading *Glissant's engagement with maroon history as a practice of a specific kind of marronage*, two conceptualisations precede the

¹¹⁸Neil Roberts defines 'historicist' writing in contrast to 'poeticism' in the following terms: "a work of historicism [...] utilizes written and oral texts for means of documentation, evaluation, and examination of previous occurrences. historicism is compatible with political imagination, may be complementary to poeticist treatises, and can be either solely backward- looking or both backward- and forward- looking. late modern Afro-Caribbean historicism has been dominated by Pan-Africanist and Marxist thinking, which are often are in conflict" (2015, 184).

main line of study pursued in this chapter. These conceptualisations concern the discursive and radical nature of Glissant's approach to politics which, in my view, can be discerned from Glissant's own writings on the 'root causes' or 'curses' haunting particular societies, and the importance of 'founding myths' or 'epics', whose meanings and significance for this chapter I will elucidate in the following before moving on to the main inquiry of this chapter.

We Need New Founding Myths – Glissant's Radical Discursive Approach to Politics

A key characteristic of Glissant's approach towards the analysis and solution of political issues can be called *discursive*.¹¹⁹ It is discursive in the sense that Glissant considers the existence of narratives to lie at the basis of political issues and conflicts. Glissant's approach to political issues can moreover be said to be *radical* in the sense that, instead of being invested in treating the 'symptoms' of particular conflicts that play out in or across political communities – be they acts of physical violence, poverty, structures of oppression and exclusions –, Glissant considered it the responsibility of poets to treat the 'root-causes' underlying these political problems. In that sense, a part of his political practice was deliberately concerned with the cultural level of political issues that he perceived to be tied to the production of particular narratives. Glissant at no point in his work theorised this practice as being constitutive for his political practice. Yet, across several of his essays and interviews, the specificity of this approach can be discerned. Briefly engaging with two pertinent examples serves to demonstrate this point. These examples are, firstly, Glissant's conceptualisation of the 'curse' or 'root problem' underlying political issues through his engagement with the fictional work of William Faulkner, and secondly, his conceptualisation of two opposing types of founding myths or epics as contained in his essay book *Introduction à une poétique du divers* (1996).

In his work on William Faulkner (FM 1996), Glissant wrote about the root-causes underlying the structural racism persisting in the US-American South as being attributable to an unresolved 'curse'. Beginning his work in New Orleans, for Glissant a 'land of creolisation', Faulkner's literature was 'world literature'¹²⁰ for Glissant in the sense that it revealed the most about "ones' own unavoidable locality at the same time as the Relation of this locality to the world-totally" (FM 36). In Glissant's reading, Faulkner, in his capacity as a 'poet of relation', wrote the 'epic of the American South', an epic that centred around a fundamental curse hanging over this part of the world, a curse that dominates the fates of the families in Faulkner's fictional oeuvre. In Glissant's reading, this curse was brought about by the settler's theft of the land from the Indigenous people and a subsequent obsession with legitimacy on the part of the settlers that manifested itself

¹¹⁹As will become apparent in the following elaborations, and as pointed out in 1.4.2., I refer to a 'discursive' dimension not in a specific Foucauldian or poststructural sense, but more generally as a text- or narrative-based political dimension.

¹²⁰For an elaborate engagement with Glissant's take on world literature see 4.3.4.

in ongoing concerns about rightful filiation. Glissant wrote in this respect that Faulkner's "epic encapsulates and expresses the instincts of people brought together in one place by a shared threat and a common defeat" (FM 19). In this context, the black population in the South 'counted' for Faulkner, although they themselves are not directly concerned by the question of legitimacy as much as Faulkner's protagonists. By 'enduring' they do, however, "embody a position (as people) that is weighty and substantial" (FM 57). With Indigenous people disappearing from the literary landscape of Faulkner's oeuvre, the slaves and former slaves become "the unsurpassable point of reference" (FM 59), who are both subjected to and resisting the violence emanating from the initial curse and the ongoing psychological imbalance that plays out as a result of the deep-seated insecurity on the part of the white population who illegitimately claim to be the 'rightful owners of the land'. For Glissant, it is only once the founding narrative of the South is re-written, once the complex entanglements of European settlers, Indigenous Americans and African slaves is made visible, that a new political dynamic can develop in this part of the world. It is precisely in his engagement with addressing this founding curse of the South that Glissant perceived the political value of Faulkner's literature. Having outlined the role of the curse for Glissant, as a root problem to be addressed by a politics of relation, the ensuing discussion turns to an elaboration of Glissant's conceptions of the founding myth and epic.

In a collection of essays and interviews titled *Introduction à une poétique du divers* (1996), Glissant abstracted from his arguments about Faulkner's work to elaborate on what he called the importance of the 'epic' which he, at times, also referred to as founding myth. In an essay in the volume called *Culture et Identité* Glissant described his conception of the epic via an explication of his takes on problems of identity, namely the conflict between identities perceived as rhizomes or as single roots (1.4.1.). Glissant argued that a more collectively embedded 'thought of single roots' and the 'thought of rhizome' emerges from these two opposing concepts: "*La racine unique est celle qui tue autour d'elle alors que le rhizome est la racine qui s'étend à la rencontre d'autres racines*"¹²¹ (IPD 59). Using the same conceptual opposition, Glissant categorised different cultures as being either 'atavistic' or 'composite'. In his view, atavistic cultures are associated with the ideas of single roots, a fixed account of the origins of a people, and a prioritisation of biological filiation, traits that, for Glissant, are closely linked to claims about legitimate ownership over a particular territory claims that often refer back to the notion of a 'promised land' ("*terre élue = territoire*", promised land = territory) (IPD 60). Glissant remarked that the narratives produced around this notion are as powerful in artistic terms as they are lethal since they perceive cultural mixing as an inherent threat to the sense of 'unity' maintained by communities adhering to this kind of world-view. In contrast to

¹²¹"The single root is that which kills its surroundings, whereas the rhizome is the root which extends by encountering other roots", my translation.

atavistic cultures, Glissant argued that 'composite cultures' are cultures marked by creolisation, a process that render it impossible for any community to claim rightful ownership of the land, where no fixed account of a community's genealogy is available and where the lines of filiation have been blurred through practices of intermarriage or altogether broken. As Glissant remarked, often-times within these composite cultures there might be an opposition between atavistic and composite cultures. He referred to the case Mexico in this respect, which he categorised as a composite culture in which an atavistic culture exists among Indigenous peoples, such as in Chiapas¹²² (IPD 60). For the Caribbean context, Glissant however argued that: “*pour nous Créoles de la Caraïbe il y ait une sorte de trace inconsciente de cette existence amérindienne. Mais en tout cas il n'y a pas de conflit ethnique parce que la réalité même de l'atavisme amérindien a disparu*”¹²³ (IPD 60). With the disappearance of the atavistic element through the genocide committed against the Indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, Glissant argued that the risk for the outbreak of ethnic conflicts in the Caribbean dissipated. Although these sweeping statements warrant to be analysed more closely, my point here is not to critically discuss their validity, or the analytical strength of the binary categories he proposed, but to make a more general point concerning Glissant's approach to political problems and the relevance he accorded to specific narratives he referred to as founding myths. The consequences Glissant abstracted from the Caribbean context are important to note in that regard:

*“Le problème se pose de savoir comment changer l'imaginaire, la mentalité et l'intellect des humanités d'aujourd'hui de telle sorte qu'à l'intérieur des cultures ataviques les conflits ethniques cessent d'apparaître comme des absolus, et de telle sorte que dans les pays créolisés les conflits ethniques et nationalistes cessent d'apparaître comme des nécessités imparables (inévitables)”*¹²⁴ (IPD 61).

In other words, for Glissant, changing the imaginary of cultures from atavistic to rhizomatic conceptions of identity would prevent political conflicts to deteriorate into outbreaks of large-scale physical violence, and thereby turns into a political imperative. In analogue fashion, Glissant distinguished between different narratives of founding myths that have resulted in the principle of atavistic cultures by referring to some of them as 'myths of elucidation', that provide explanations for the encounter of diverse elements constituting a social structure, whereas the role of the 'founding myth' is to sanction the presence of a community on a territory and its right to expand via the narrative of a particular story of origins of its community and the world as a whole “*la communauté considère alors qu'il lui est donné par droit d'accroître les limites de ce territoire.*

122 For a theoretical engagement between Glissant's politics of relation and the Zapatista movement emerging from the Chiapas region see 5.4.5.

123 “for us Creoles in the Caribbean there is a kind of unconscious trace of the existence of the Amerindians. But in any case there are no ethnic conflicts because the reality of the Amerindian atavism has disappeared”, my translation.

124 “the problem is therefore how the imaginaries, the mentality and the intellect of the world's humanities can be changed in such a way that in atavistic cultures ethnic conflicts cease to appear as absolutes and that in creolised countries ethnic or nationalist conflicts cease to appear as (inevitable) necessities”, my translation.

*C'est là un de fondements de l'expansion colonial*¹²⁵ (IPD 62). Wherever a founding myth appears among atavistic cultures, the corresponding notion of identity will take the form of filiation and legitimacy according to Glissant, "*c'est la racine unique qui exclut l'autre comme participant*"¹²⁶ (IPD 63).

The main narrative that has grown out of the founding myth of single roots for Glissant is History with a capital H, as it has been associated most prominently with Hegel's *Vorlesung über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (1837) and its claim that Africa falls outside the evolution of world-history: "*L'Histoire est donc réellement fille du mythe fondateur*"¹²⁷ (IPD 62). In composite or creole societies, where it is not possible to establish such a founding myth, the corresponding conception of identity for Glissant is in line with his notion of Relation and categorically includes the other (IPD 63). Instead of upholding narratives of fixed genesis and biological filiation, the discursive foundations of societies are (oral) *tales*, which in Glissant's view destabilise the ability to claim exclusive ownership over a particular territory associated with (written) founding myths. For Glissant, a central task of the poet emerging from this problem is the reconciliation of these two narrative forms: "*Aujourd'hui, nous avons à concilier l'écriture du mythe et l'écriture du conte, le souvenir de la Gènes et la prescience de la Relation, et c'est là une tâche difficile. Mais quelle autre semblerait plus belle?*"¹²⁸ (IPD 63-64).

Further on in the same essay, he elaborates on the kind of epic he considers himself to be involved in creating. Instead of being exclusively committed to the production of a counter-epic to the narrative underlying European colonialism, Glissant made the case that the epic he considers himself to be contributing is geared towards a community that still needs to be created, which he refers to as a world-community:

*"ce qui se passe c'est que tous les peuples qui se décolonisent [...] opposent à l'épique occidentale leur épique, qui est très beau. Mais pour moi ce n'est pas encore le véritable épique, parce que le véritable épique a comme objet la communauté la plus menacée à l'heure actuelle dans le monde, qui est la communauté-monde. Et c'est le rapport de ma communauté-monde qui pourrait fonder l'épique"*¹²⁹ (IPD 79).

The allusions Glissant made here with regards to the establishment of a world-community will be further unpacked in chapter 4. What is, however, important to retain at this point is that in

125 "the community considers that it has been given the right to expand beyond the limits of its territory. This is one of the foundations of colonial expansion", my translation.

126 "the single root with excludes the other as participant", my translation.

127 "History is thus effectively the daughter of the founding myth", my translation.

128 "Today we need to reconcile the writing of the myth and the writing of the tale, the memory of Genesis and the foresight of Relation, and this is a difficult task. But which other task would appear more beautiful?", my translation.

129 "what is happening is that all people who are engaged in a decolonial struggle [...] oppose their own epics to a Western epic, which is very beautiful. But for me that is not yet the true epic, because the true epic has as its object the community that is the most threatened in the world today, which is the world-community. And it is my relationship with this world-community that could found this epic", my translation.

his opposition to the exclusionary Eurocentric discourse of History, Glissant considered himself to actively create the discursive basis for an alternative political community by imagining a different history, a different narrative basis, for it. Elsewhere Glissant also stated in this vein that he considered his literary activity to be 'absolutely' marked by an 'epic preoccupation', devoted to the recovery of forgotten oral histories that form part of the epic of the Tout-Monde (EBR 77), and that “*il reste de grands épopées à écrire, celles du peuple, qui se rencontrent, celles qui évoquent la transformation du monde*”¹³⁰ (Baudot 1993, nr. 738). The new epic Glissant had in mind was, therefore, not a singular narration, such as the book of Genesis – which refers to a shared line of ancestor, and an unchanging sense of identity – but an account that, in the words of Chamoiseau, would “explode any fixedness into a shared consciousness, an optimal degree of fullness. A consciousness that has been and always will be caught in the process of becoming through a swarm of images”¹³¹ (2017, 95).

The two conceptualisations of the 'curse' and the 'founding myth', which I have presented here, form the basis on which Glissant's discursive approach to political issues can be approached. In order to further specify Glissant's usage of the 'founding myth' I will in the following briefly contrast it with two alternative conceptions of 'myth', as proposed in the work of Roland Barthes and Jean Luc-Nancy, to highlight some of the main differences and similarities.

Contrasting Conceptions of Myths in Roland Barthes and Jean-Luc Nancy

The interchangeable nature in which Glissant referred to myths and epics might imply that the two terms were almost synonymous for him. Whereas epics usually refer to a specific text, “a long narrative poem in elevated style recounting the deeds of a legendary or historical hero”,¹³² of which the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* are among the most well-known examples in the West, it can also more broadly refer to “a series of events or body of legend or tradition thought to form the proper subject of an epic”,¹³³ and thus form a more abstract discourse made up of a multiplicity of texts and practices. Glissant, in fact, referred to both senses of the term, for example when he referred to the *Iliad* as forming part of a larger epic of the West that excludes the 'other' (4.3.), but also when he wrote about the 'true epic' of the world-community that still needed to be written. A body of Glissant's own writings can also be considered as falling into the genre of the epic. Among them one could cite the theatre play about Toussaint Louverture *Monsieur Toussaint* (MT 1961), the long narrative poem *Les Indes* recounting the history of the Caribbean (LI 1965), and the unpublished *Conte de ce que fut la Tragédie d'Askia*, which recounts the story of a fallen African king in classic

130 “the great epics remain to be written, those about the people that enter into contact with one another, those that evoke the transformation of the world”, my translation.

131 “fait exploser les fixités dans une conscience partagées à un optimal degré de plénitude. Conscience dès lors toujours en devenir dans un essaim d'images”, my translation.

132 See: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/epic>.

133 See: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/epic>.

epic fashion (LMI 2000). In general parlance, the term myth overlaps with that of the epic but is more intimately tied to a specific community, as implied by the notions of 'creation myth' or 'myth of origin'. Usually passed on orally, myths are usually considered to tell a “traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon“.¹³⁴ Again, a myth can also be detached from a concrete story and the notion of origins and refer to “a popular belief or tradition that has grown up around something or someone *especially*: one embodying the ideals and institutions of a society or segment of society“.¹³⁵ Glissant's use of myths seems to be in line with these common-sensical descriptions of the term referring to events or histories that have taken place in a 'time before time' where a set mode of recording history had not yet been established. In contrast to a written epic, a myth adjusts to changing times as it is considered the basis for a 'timeless' sense of belonging to a particular community.

In his acceptance of the myth as a necessary part of what constitutes communities, and his insistence on the necessity of changing myths for them to become more inclusive and diverse, Glissant differs from the poststructuralist critique of the myth as advanced for example by Roland Barthes and Jean-Luc Nancy. In his book *Mythologies*, Barthes studied 'myths in French daily life' (2006, 10) as a way of tracking down “in the decorative display of *what-goes-without-saying*, the ideological abuse which, in my view, is hidden there“ (10). According to Barthes, a mythological construction mainly serves to imply a natural or logical connection between a sign and its meaning, a connection that is actually constructed with a particular political goal in mind. Accordingly, his interest in myths was a deconstructive one aiming at demystification or at uncovering that certain signs circulating in everyday discourse are *merely myths*, that is simply untrue. For Barthes, who mainly studied the mythologies (re)produced in French mass media, myths are therefore an example of what he considers 'depoliticized speech' in that it aims at presenting the capitalist status quo as inevitable: “myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal“ (142). Consequently, revolutionary discourse geared towards the overthrow of the bourgeoisie can, by definition, not be mythical (147). These views emphasise that Glissant's interest in myths differs significantly from Barthes. Whereas Glissant was primarily invested in the *creative or revolutionary powers of myths* to form communities that have, up until now, been prevented from establishing themselves as such, Barthes' work aims at a critique of bourgeois ideology and the mechanisms it uses to naturalise its way of life, and the capitalist order at its basis. These different conceptions also highlight that Glissant's understanding of literary production was not tied to economic considerations in a deterministic way, and it also operated outside the French national framework which

¹³⁴ See: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/myth>.

¹³⁵ See: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/myth>.

remains the focus of Barthes' work. In contrast to this national angle, Glissant's interest in myths is intimately concerned with the world-view contained in specific narratives, and their potentials for providing an imaginary basis for an alternative way of being in the Tout-Monde.

A second conception of myths, which is arguably more closely aligned with Glissant, can be found in Jean-Luc Nancy, whose work will feature again in chapter 4 (4.1.1.). In the chapter *Myth Interrupted* in his book *The Inoperative Community* (1991), Nancy makes the case that postmodern literature 'interrupts' the myth of an unchanged story of origins and the sense of belonging to a timeless community. Arriving at his dismissal of this kind of 'original myth' via an engagement with Romanticism and Nazism (47) Nancy argues that "the idea of myth is perhaps the entire pretension on the part of the West to appropriate its own origin" and that "we no longer have anything to do with myth" (46).

Although, Nancy's categorical dismissal of myth might set his conception at odds with Glissant, what Nancy calls 'the idea of myth' as the 'Idea of the West' can be equated with Glissant's dismissal of History with a capital H as a particularly problematic myth to which an alternative narrative has to be created. From the dismissal of this 'myth of myth' or meta-myth, Nancy does not proceed towards a demythologising of everyday discourse, like Barthes, but is interested in how myths have transformed themselves in line with an alternative sense of community in a postmodern context. For Nancy, more so than for Barthes, myths are linked to communities and the creation of worlds – "Myth arises only from a community and for it: they engender one another. infinitely and immediately" (50) –, views that echo some of Glissant's central preoccupations. An important distinction between Nancy and Glissant is that Nancy's writing is situated after the historical break produced by Nazism and the Holocaust. The 'we' to which Nancy refers has lost the belief in any meta-myth, such as the fascist ideology of *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil), that claims the power to explain 'where we come from and where we are going', with the collective being presented as a homogenous *one*. For Glissant, whose writing is positioned after the historical break of the slave trade, the world, the people and their cultures were never *one* to begin with, but always *many* – arriving in the Caribbean from all parts of the world.

Despite these differences, it is Nancy's belief that 'literature' that effectively replaces myth in the contemporary context and brings him closer to Glissant. For Nancy, the 'law of compearance' (61), which he also refers to as *being-in-common*, is expressed in communication between singular beings: "It is a contact, it is a contagion: a touching, the transmission of a trembling at the edge of being, the communication of a passion that makes us fellows, or the communication of the passion to be fellows, to be *in common*" (61). For Nancy, this 'endless' communication among an unspecified community of humans is best expressed in literature, which he generally refers to as

'speech', thus including written and oral, fictional or non-fictional forms: “whatever kind of speech it may be [...] that puts into play nothing other than being in common” (65). Whereas, for Nancy, the 'myth of myth' refers back to a singular point of origin, and a communitarian certainty about who belongs and who does not, literature for Nancy creates 'communion through communication' and pre-empts any sense of a completed or fixed identity and is thus similar to Glissant's aforementioned notion of rhizomatic identity (65) (1.4.1.). For Nancy, the writer of literature thus replaces the teller of the myth, who at the same time also *becomes the hero of the myth* (69).

In my view, Glissant would agree with Nancy's emphasis on literature's reliance on exchanging with others, and on the relational notion of *being-in-common* as a new basis on which a different kind of community can be created.¹³⁶ If the sense of community emerging out of Nancy's work is pursued to its very limit, it also includes the whole-world in the sense of the non-totalitarian totality of Glissant's *Tout-Monde* (1.4.1.). Although Nancy does not become as explicit about this aspect as Glissant did in his writings, if the 'new myth' or the 'truest myth' Nancy proposes for the contemporary moment is taken to its extreme, it also has the potential of founding a world-community. This becomes apparent in passages like the following where Nancy writes:

“A new humanity must arise from/in its new myth, and this myth itself must be [...] nothing less than the totalization of modern literature and philosophy, as well as ancient mythology, revived and united with the mythologies of the other peoples of the world. The totalization of myths goes hand in hand with the myth of totalization, and the 'new' mythology essentially consists in the production of a speech that would unite, totalize, and thereby put (back) into the world the totality of the words, discourses, and songs of a humanity in the process of reaching its fulfillment (or reaching its end)” (51).

I will return to Glissant's project about constructing this kind of 'tale that includes all other tales', and 'song of all songs' in my engagement with his conception of world-literature (4.3.4.). Of more immediate interest for the ensuing sections of this chapter is however that, while Glissant shares the general thrust of Nancy's conception of a 'new myth' that is created in the literary realm as the founding myth of a world-community, he was less reserved against *actively working towards bringing this community into existence or in making it visible*. In that sense, Glissant did not entertain the same binary oppositions as Nancy when he opposes myth to literature, an opposition also pointed out in Britton's reading of Nancy when she writes: “Myth is to do with totality, completion, constructing an identity; literature is to do with the fragmentary, the incomplete, the suspension rather than the institution of meanings” (Britton 2008, 14). Instead of upholding this categorical opposition, I argue that, for Glissant, founding myths are not tied up with exclusionary projects per se, even if they are produced by an individual author. In light of my engagement with Glissant's arguments in *Introduction à une poétique du divers* and the curse above,

¹³⁶See also Celia Britton's affirmative reading of Nancy's work on communities being closely aligned to Glissant (2008, 13-15).

what matters instead is whether they are based on single roots or rhizomatic visions of the community, whether they are open or closed, inclusive or exclusive. For Glissant, literature can therefore actively employ the tools of myth in an attempt to shape the discursive basis in line with the normative thrust of his philosophy, and even attempt to bring a completely new community into existence. This line of work can be pursued collectively or individually. In both cases, it can be linked to the community-creating aspect of the political tradition of marronage, as much as it suggests a particular fugitivity out of an annihilating colonial history or non-history, towards the creation of a new mode of historiography operating on an alternative epistemological basis, characteristics that will become more apparent in the ensuing sections.

Chapter Overview

Reading Glissant's work on the maroon as a heroic figure against the conceptual background of the Glissant's understanding of the political role of the, curse, the epic and the founding myth has several consequences that inform the structure of this chapter. Glissant's engagement with the colonial historiography of the Caribbean in the first section (2.1.) forms part of his engagement with the myth of a singular History of the world, in which all parts outside of Europe are relegated to a perpetual game of catching up with the West. This part of his political practice is discursive and radical in the sense that it tries to solve the root problem or curse that he considers to haunt the Caribbean: the relegation of its *actual history* into the 'dustbins of history'. Alongside this *critical* thrust of his engagement with history I make the case that the *creative* dimension of Glissant's philosophy of history has to be taken into account as well. The second section (2.2.) of this chapter takes up this line of work. This dimension refers to Glissant's attempt to actively re-write Caribbean history as offering a new discursive and imaginary basis, a new founding myth, from which alternative communities could emerge. As a heroic figure, the maroon occupies a central place in this project. As cited before (1.4.3.), Glissant argued in *Le discours antillais* that 'the maroon is the only true popular hero of the Antillean' (LDA 104), and hero figures are central to the fabrication of myths. The third section of this chapter (2.3.) begins the exploration of a non-discursive aspect of Glissant's political practice around the (re)making of history. As Nancy has pointed out, the writer him- or herself tends to become the heroic figure around which new myths are being produced. An investigation of how Glissant embodied and actively performed the figure of the storyteller – which I propose to see as being modelled on the fictional character of Papa Longoué –, allows me to describe how Glissant's political practice actively tried to bridge textual and non-textual dimensions, and to give concrete meaning to his intellectual projects around the re-making of history and the kind of political practice that could emerge from this alternative discourse.

2.1. Historical Marronage and the Conceptualisation of an Elusive Kind of Flight

“Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it“
– Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963, 210)

In a filmed conversation with Patrick Chamoiseau, Glissant explained that what initially drew him to work on marronage was a consensus among historians that viewed marronage as little more than the result of desperate individual slaves who feared being punished or were in conflict with their masters. It viewed marronage as an instinctive reaction to unbearable individual circumstances, and not as collective cultural revolt:

“Ces pensées la ne concevait pas du tout le marronage comme une révolte culturel et collective, pas du tout [...] alors qu'il est évident que le marronage a conduit ainsi à la constitution de véritables république dans les grandes Antilles qui se recomposé de leur vie en société en Afrique et les ont recomposé à l'écart du système esclavagiste et on peut pas nier le caractère à la fois collective, culturel et de résistance du marronage. Et qui autant était nié pendant des temps et des temps par les historiens de la colonisation aux Antilles. Pour moi au départ c'était ça”¹³⁷ (Christiani 1993).

Several aspects from this quote are worth highlighting, since they will be taken up in the ensuing discussion. The first concerns the negation of marronage as a cultural and collective phenomenon, the second is its role in the creation of 'true republican constitutions' in the Caribbean pointing to the importance of their political status, and the third refers to the reconstruction of African social forms outside the system of slavery. In the following three sub-sections I will engage with these negations (2.1.1.), discuss the main concepts employed in colonial historical scholarship (2.1.2.), and elaborate on their negative implications for the way in which the political theoretical potential of marronage has been perceived (2.1.3.), before turning to Glissant's creative response to these intellectual currents in the next section.

2.1.1. Colonial and Decolonial Historiography

In contrast to colonial accounts that either denied the very existence of marronage as a form of collective resistance and continental phenomenon, to which Glissant referred in the above quote, contemporary historiography recognises the fact that marronage was as old as slavery (Debien

¹³⁷“These thoughts did not at all conceive marronage as a cultural and collective revolt, not at all [...] even while it is evident that marronage led to the constitution of true republics in the Greater Antilles that were reconstituted from their social lives in Africa which they re-established at a distance from the system of slavery and one cannot deny the collective and cultural character of the resistance exercised by marronage. And all of this was denied over a long time by historians of colonialism in the Antilles. For me, this was the beginning”, my translation.

1996, 112) and cannot be dismissed into what Alvin Thompson calls the “trash bins of history” or trivialised as “a series of isolated episodes without any theoretical or conceptual framework within the wider history of national emancipation” (2006, 12). Since the publication of Richard Price's edited volume *Maroon Societies* in 1973 as the first major collection devoted to the history of marronage (Roberts 2015, 184), a growing body of scholarly work is being devoted to countering the colonial historiography that shaped much of the written records on the Caribbean region over the last five hundred years. The reconceptualisation of marronage from “timid escapades without a tomorrow” to “true 'rebels', dedicated and aggressive, hostile to slavery” (Fouchard quoted in Thompson 2006, 9) is at the basis of much of this work.¹³⁸ For Thompson, the importance of the emerging academic subfield 'maroon studies' (2006, 1-2), studying marronage as a continental phenomenon, is not only highlighted by the fact that many maroon societies survived for several decades, and in some cases for more than a century, but is, moreover reflected in the visibility of maroon heritage across the Americas, such as the *Nègre marron* monument in Haiti or the *National Black Consciousness Day* in Brazil, and the iconography of great maroon leaders, such as the female maroon leader Nanny of the Maroons in Jamaica (2-6).

Generalisations, Romanticisations and Negations of Marronage on a Continental Scale

In an attempt of establishing maroon communities as a unit of analysis for a wide range of disciplines such as history, sociology, politics, linguistics, anthropology, music and literature, Thompson (2006, 7-13) summarises the commonalities of maroon communities across the Americas in the following manner: In a general historic sense, maroons built settlements in inaccessible and inhospitable areas, possessed outstanding skills in guerilla warfare which they had to use in what was often a state of continuous warfare, were able to adapt their economies to new environments by transferring and combining farming techniques from the colonisers, Africa and Indigenous American peoples. Their status was moreover characterised by an inability to disengage fully from the enemy, which is often described as 'nexus' or 'symbiosis' between slaveholding and maroon areas since maroon societies depended on the plantation system for arms and various kinds of materials, but also on information and physical protection (14-15). Internally, maroon societies were comprised of a diversity of people, that can not be limited to any ethnicity, age, gender or particular plantations (13), while there was a marked predominance of Africans among both enslaved persons and maroons, who “came with a cornucopia of thoughts, ideologies and skills. These were modified under the circumstances of New World slavery and the new physical and social environments in to which they were thrust” (7). Despite these commonalities, the variations among different maroon communities were stark. The particular forms of marronage varied

¹³⁸See for example Eugene Genovese's book *From Rebellion to Revolution – Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (1992).

significantly depending on geographic variables, since maroons were mainly able to find shelter in dense forests, swamps or mountainous terrain that was difficult to access for colonial agents. Other factors include the general geopolitical set-up around these communities that were either hostile to or tolerant towards them as well as the social stratification of the population of the plantation (Bonilla 2015, 43). These generalisations are not only interesting to note with regards to expanding scholarly engagements with marronage. More importantly for my argument about Glissant's marronage, the above mentioned characteristics will play a role in Glissant's own conceptualisation and practice of marronage which, as I will argue, not only draws from or presents striking parallels with the historical phenomenon but also extends its movements into the context of the 21st century without, as I hope, over-stretching its metaphorical power.

Against a general reaction to simply invert the colonial depiction of maroon communities from historically irrelevant gatherings into valiant revolutionary states, a couple of historical observations are frequently mentioned to counter-balance a simplistic or overly 'romantic' image of marronage. So-called 'colonial treatise' that were struck between maroon societies and other polities have, for example, often been referred to as anathema, capitulation or prove of a 'lack of revolutionary consciousness' on the part of maroon communities (Thompson 2006, 265-66). Another aspect that is repeatedly brought up as an argument against an inherently revolutionary nature of marronage movements, is the fact that some maroon communities were themselves 'slaveholding' societies and thus did not alter the plantation system which they fled (223-29). In response to the former charge, Thompson has made the case that colonial treatise of collaboration could, just as well, be cast as maroon triumphs over slaveholding regimes since they were proof that they could not be conquered by force. In response to the latter, Thompson emphasises that the forms of bondage among maroon communities still offered stark differences to slavery on the plantation. In many instances the 'abduction' of slaves from the plantation and the confinement of these abducted slaves for a period of time, was a form of recruitment to strengthen the maroon armies. Without wanting to venture too deep into these debates among historians, an awareness of them is helpful in contrasting the specificities of Glissant's depiction and what I consider to be his practice of intellectual marronage.

As I will argue, Glissant did not operate with generalisations relying on an either/or logic pertaining to the revolutionary nature of maroons, nor did he base his views on marronage solely on the colonial archive. Instead, he tried to redefine their productive political potentials by being less loyal to historical facts or sociological categorisations, and more concerned with thinking marronage and its political implications further. Since his engagement with marronage took place in context of the French Antilles, a closer look at how this continental phenomenon played out in this

specific region is of particular interest for this study.

Marronage in the French Antilles – Nothing to See Here?

In the context of the French Antilles, with which Glissant was most familiar, historians generally agree that except for French Guiana and Saint-Domingue, where mountainous terrain enabled the set-up of larger maroon communities, the relatively small size of the other islands under French colonisation prevented larger settlements (Price 1996, 105). This is seconded by Glissant who wrote about the case of Martinique: “*la limite du marronage [...] est la limite de la terre: l'exiguïté du pays ne permettra pas le développement systématique du communautés*”¹³⁹ (LDA 69). At the same time, however, the flights by individuals or smaller groups, referred to as '*petit marronage*', as elaborated in the ensuing sub-section, was of such prevalence that the French colonial administration introduced a categorisation of marronage that was intricately tied to the rules of punishment as laid down by the French King Louis XIV in 1685 in the *Code Noir* (Debien 1996, 113-14). Depending on the documents under study, the severity of *petit marronage* in the French Antilles was either described as a 'thorn in the side of the plantation enterprise', a plague, a headache or 'open wound' (112). This led historians to acknowledge that, despite its relatively smaller scale in numeric terms, marronage needs to be seen as “deeply woven into the fabric of the French Antillean history” (105).

Notwithstanding the relative prevalence of cases of *petit* over *grand marronage* in the French Antilles, there were several instances in which the size of maroon groups increased numerically. Debien for example mentions a group of maroons led by Francisque Fabulé in 1665, that comprised up to five hundred maroons (108).¹⁴⁰ In 1687, it is estimated that there were about a thousand maroons in Martinique (115), and although no cases of collective marronage were recorded in Martinique from 1740s onwards (Burton 1997, 102), the struggle against the maroons was still deemed unsatisfactory by the colonial regime which put further measures in place to prevent freed slaves from granting maroons refuge (Debien 1996, 117). For Bonilla, the severity of punishments decreed by the Sovereign Council of Martinique in 1672 for slaves that engaged in marronage “suggests that long-term marronage was of concern not just to plantation owners but also, and perhaps to an even greater degree, to the colonial state, for which maroon communities posed the threat of an alternative polity” (2015, 44).

Counting the numeric strength of those who participated in marronage, or evaluating the reaction it provoked from its adversaries is only one way of measuring the importance of a movement of political resistance. Glissant's approach to the experience and the historical material

¹³⁹“The limits of marronage [...] are the limits of the land: the lack of space did not allow for the systematic development of communities”, my translation.

¹⁴⁰Bonilla also refers to the case of Mocachy, known as *le roi de bois* (king of the forest), who marooned for more than 25 years before being captured, leading the Kellers, a community comprising up to 2800 people in the area of Petit Bourg (2015, 44).

he found in Martinique invites a stronger interpretation of how even small acts of physical resistance can be transformed into larger movements when they are taken up in different domains, such as in the realm of fiction. In the same vein, their 'effectiveness' might not be judged within the era in which the concerned political practice was first enacted but perhaps in an altogether different era. On this basis, one can reflect on how some of its techniques have been taken up and remodelled in an ongoing decolonial struggles.

What Cause, What Effect? The Disavowal of Marronage Through Historical 'Objectivity'

The distortion of the historical scale and relevance of the historical phenomenon of marronage, especially with regards to the effect it had on the colonial enterprise, does not always take the form of a complete disavowal of the existence or scale of collective forms of fugitivity. It can also, less overtly, be expressed in historical studies that do acknowledge the existence of larger maroon societies based on allegedly objective scientific methods that rely on strict conceptual differentiations and material evidence, but that are inadvertently written from the point of view of the coloniser. In Gabriel Debien's overview of marronage in the French Caribbean, which was included in Richard Price's *Maroon Societies* (1996), Debien for instance writes about the 'causes of marronage' (127) as being “many and complex, but there was nothing mysterious about them, and it appears that they remained fairly constant throughout the history of colonial slavery” (127). He sums them up in two points: “1. the harsh treatment received at the hand of bookkeepers and managers, and the fear of punishment, and 2. an inadequate diet, which is often related to the first cause since it brings on exhaustion, which in turn provokes harsh punishment (133). By identifying the major 'triggers', 'opportunities', or 'causes'¹⁴¹ for flight, Debien implicitly confuses the *symptoms* with the actual *causes* of marronage. The single cause of marronage – and this case can be made with Glissant as much as with any point of view that takes the tradition of the oppressed seriously –, was slavery itself, and the systematic dehumanisation, violation and exploitation that the plantation system was built on. In the context of my argument about marronage as the forming the tradition of and fitting framework of description for Glissant's politics of relation, this is an important point to remark.

The perception that subjugation was accepted, normalised, perceived as 'just' or 'inevitable' by the enslaved perspires from several of Debien's formulations. Whereas slavery is normalized in each of the following sentences, marronage becomes the 'unnatural', an abnormality in need of explanation, an exception to the rule of normal 'the order of things' (1996, 128). This is evident when Debien, for example, writes “These punishments provoked vengeance, blows and sometimes even murder: Flight was a natural consequence” (127), or “The cruel and unnatural conduct of

¹⁴¹In the French Caribbean, Debien also cites the following other causes: revenge for the murder of a female slave, the holidays between Christmas and New Year, an act of theft, the refusal to be transferred onto another plantation (1996, 128-31).

several masters to their slaves caused frequent desertions” (127-28), or “By fleeing, the slaves simply wished to rid themselves of a bearable bookkeeper” (128). In what appears to be a naive trust in the colonial archive, Debien writes elsewhere with regards to a point made earlier that, “Despite the prevalence of this sort of marronage, which affected almost every plantation, the colonists did not seem very concerned about it [...] there seems to have been a genuine casualness about it” (111). The adoption of a colonial perspective on slavery can be endorsed to such a degree that it ends up trivializing the most horrendous forms of punishment (118).

Debien's account of marronage, based on the letters written by plantation managers and their account books, thus readily reproduces the point of view of the coloniser and supplements them with his own evaluations of their accuracy. The subjectivity of slaves remains inaccessible to him. Still, he infers to know 'how they felt' based on the written accounts he studies: “A few months later, another problem: more marronage. The plantation had been sold. The slaves knew that they had no power over the imposition of a new master, but they did not want to move to another district” (131). I engage with Debien's approach to marronage at such length because, in the first instance, I consider it to be important to be aware of a point of view that attempts to accurately describe the characteristics of a politics of marronage (scale/causes/perspective) based on the colonial archive – and the perception of the scale, the causes and perspective/severity –, in order to contrast them with Glissant's rendition of them further below. In a second instance, and Roberts has made this case in his book *Freedom as Marronage*, relegating slaves to a zone of nonbeing¹⁴² or disavowing their human agency by positing their status as slave as ontological fixed absolutes not only re-enacts the initial act of enslavement and dehumanization through objectification but precludes the very possibility of seeing how modes of resistance against the plantation system have been invented and performed.

Whereas my concern in this sub-section has been with the historical scholarship produced around marronage, the following sub-section will discuss how the struggle between colonial and anti-colonial perspectives on marronage is reflected in the categories that are informed by colonial historical scholarship as much as they are inspired by a sociological drive to analytically take apart a social phenomenon to better understand it.

2.1.2. *Petit* or *Grand*? The Pitfalls of the Plantocracy's Categories

As several scholars have remarked, the distinction historians make between *petit* and *grand marronage*, indirectly refers back to the taxonomy that was first introduced by colonial planters in the French Antilles to measure the severity of their loss of property, and thus needs to be considered

¹⁴²On the importance of considering the 'zone of non-being' as the point of departure for marronage, Neil Roberts refers to the work of Fanon, arguing that this aspect is what differentiates marronage from other collective moves of flight by individuals and collectives (see also 5.1.2.) (Roberts 2015, 118).

as belonging to a particularly problematic discourse.¹⁴³ Scholars have, nevertheless, continued to refer to these categories as a way of differentiating among the size and ambitions of movements of marronage. An awareness of these categorisations and their implications is thus imperative for an engagement with Glissant's work on or of marronage.

For Neil Roberts, *petit marronage* is defined as “a temporary flight from slavery by an individual or small group through fugitive acts of truancy away from the zone of enslavement” (2015, 98), while its corollary *grand marronage* refers to a permanent flight by a larger group of slaves: “a flight from the plantation with no intention of ever returning, sometimes only comprising bands of twos and threes, joining larger groups that are led by a chief, living in remote, least travelled districts” (Debien 1996, 107). While *petit marronage* initially denoted a form of personal or apolitical escape, that was frequently trivialised or downplayed by the plantocracy, the notion of *grand marronage* implied a political struggle for freedom that had to be taken seriously since it presented a potential threat to a particular plantation or the plantation system (Bonilla 2015, 44).

Due to the highly complex nature of each individual case of flight, historical scholarship sought to introduce further differentiations between these two broad categories. *Petit marronage* could, for example, be further distinguished from what Debien calls 'light marronage' or *marronage léger*, an 'occasional flight' which Debien described as a kind of 'absenteeism' (1996, 111) or to which Dénètem Touam Bona refers as a 'minor labour strike' (2016a). Touam Bona also refers to what he calls 'clandestine marronage' that was mainly focused on urban spaces that offered a degree of mobility to maroons, like markets, harbours or town entrances, where maroons could enact the role of freed men, small informal traders (*pacotilleurs*), or slaves who were sent on errands by their masters. With regards to the category of *grand marronage*, Roberts has also made the case that it could be broken down into two sub-types. The first referring to bands of fugitives that sustain themselves by raiding plantations, whereas a second refers to the creation of isolationist maroon communities (2015, 100).¹⁴⁴

As Bonilla points out, these categorisations and their specification essentially rely on a combination of the factors of duration, size, motives, goals or the political nature of the escapees. As she, along with several other scholars, points out, these distinctions are however not easy to draw since one form of marronage can merge, inform, or spark another. As Roberts writes in this regard: “Although *petit marronage* is neither a state of war nor revolution, it can cause them. Causality and purpose are intertwined, and *petit marronage* is a micro-political causal mechanism

¹⁴³As Glissant pointed out in *Le discours antillais*, they neatly mirror the differentiation introduced by Victor Schoelcher who differentiated between (a) rebellious maroons, (b) occasional maroons and (c) maroons that fled out of personal desperation (LDA 104).

¹⁴⁴Roberts refers to the historic cases of François Makandal as representative of the former, and the Le Maniel community as the latter (2015, 101-02).

for the macropolitics of revolution and freedom” (2015, 98, see also Touam Bona 2016a, 3). Making a similar point, Thompson writes about the importance or possible effect a single act of escape could have on the inhabitants of a plantation: “each escape of a fellow sufferer produced prayers of success, fed the rumor mill, fired dreams, and raised the level of curiosity about freedom throughout the quarters” (Blassingame cited in Thompson 2006, 15). The potential connection or causality between different forms of flight thus troubles any neat distinction that relies on the factors of time and size. As for the motives or the political ambitions of marronage, Bonilla also cautions that historical actions of slaves tend to be assessed through contemporary categories of political action, which might render certain goals or motives invisible. For Bonilla it is thus important to bear in mind that any movement of marronage is informed by a larger intellectual and political context (2015, 45).

More than Grand – Neil Roberts' 'Sovereign' and 'Sociogenic' Marronage

Whereas, from a colonial perspective, a slave revolution geared towards the overthrow of a colonial state was considered an impossibility, due to the alleged lacking capacity for rational thought on the part of the enslaved, contemporary writers working in a decolonial tradition insist on the inherently revolutionary nature of marronage. Roberts' introduction of the concept of 'sovereign marronage' into historical and sociological discourses can be seen in this light. For Roberts, sovereign marronage is particularly apt at describing the political project of Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution of 1791, as:

“a philosophy of freedom referring to non-fleeting mass flight from slavery on a scale much larger than grand marronage. Its goal is emancipation, its scope is social-structural, its spatialization is polity-wide, its metaphysics includes the individual and community, and its medium is the lawgiver. Sovereign flight is a rejection of isolationism and popular will. Freedom is understood top down instead of bottom up. It is the singular lawgiver, or sovereign, to whom agents look for guidance to achieve freedom for self and community“ (2015, 103).

Roberts' notion of sovereign marronage as a notion with explicit political implications, in a first instance appears as a means to counter the disavowal of the Haitian Revolution in historical scholarship. In a direct way, it makes the case that in certain cases the effects of marronage could be measured along the standards of traditional political categories of constitutional political communities shaped by external sovereignty. As much as Roberts emphasises the need to revisit the Haitian constitution through the prism of a movement of marronage, he cautions against the celebration of its hierarchical governmental structure in which freedom is 'handed down' by a strong leadership figure. Instead of 'merely' overthrowing the colonial regime in order to adopt a similar political format of an authoritarian nation-state – despite in a radically anti-racist modification as was proposed in the Haitian Constitution –, Roberts supplements the notion of sovereign marronage

with what he calls 'sociogenic marronage'. Whereas Roberts associates the former with the figure of Louverture, he associates the latter with the role played by Dessalines and the Haitian people at large following the imprisonment of Louverture by the French military. Modelled on Dessalines' politics, Roberts describes sociogenic marronage in the following terms:

“sociogenic marronage allows us to see how revolutions are *themselves* moments of flight that usher in new orders and refashion society's foundations. Frantz Fanon's philosophy illuminates facets of the sociogenic and reaffirms the importance of the psychological to the lived experience of freedom. [...] a fundamental quality of marronage philosophy are its attempts at actualization of flight, of the ability of individuals to become free and to exit from that condition, and perpetual acts of attainment and restructuring are part and parcel of what it means to be human. [...] It is a non-sovereign state of being whose conception of freedom is shaped by cognition, metaphysics, egalitarianism, hope for refuge, and the experiences of masses in a social and political order. Condition, not place, is vital to its phenomenology” (116-17).

Roberts' proposition of the notion of sociogenic marronage is as innovative in the debate on historic marronage as it is relevant for my own study. Whereas the established colonial categories merely refer to objective and quantitative criteria (size, duration) to measure the importance of movements of marronage, Roberts' introduces a novel qualitative standard. What becomes the main focus of interest through Roberts' is the *qualitative difference* of maroon societies and the slave-holding societies from which they fled. Instead of operating within the same political parameters, Roberts' claims that maroons effectively created a new humanism through their act of flight and the establishment of alternative communities. As he writes with reference to Fanon's call towards the end of *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), the call to create a new man is intimately tied up with the need to *invent* and to *innovate* different ways of being together, for which sociogenic marronage stands as a “pluralistic sanctuary, relational, intrinsic to revolution, and a humanism” (120). Sociogenesis is thus the belief that our social world and political orders can be refashioned through lived experiences: “Sociogenesis is, in short, the prism that captures the process of flight from the zone of nonbeing” (119). I will return to the implications of this notion and the subtle differences I can make out to Glissant's practice of marronage more expansively in chapter 5 (5.1.).

For now it is worth noting that Robert's sociogenic marronage underlines the fact that each act of flight bears the potential of creating a new community along a set of political ideas that differs radically from those of the plantation system. Instead of being measured along existing political models, sociogenic marronage appears as an ongoing social experiment aimed towards the creation of a utopian community that is not only in fundamental opposition to the colonial model from which it emerged, it is also aware of its ephemeral nature and does not strive to replace it by taking on the permanent form of a sovereign state. This means that the old system that has been left

behind might still be in existence, but one has managed to produce a protective distance from it. Similarly to Roberts, Touam Bona emphasises the creative dimension of maroon resistance, as a movement that aims at inventing completely new forms of community that are 'diametrically opposed to the values of the plantation society' and that rupture with the dialectic of the master and slave, as I argued in 1.4.3.:

“Effectively, marronage appears here like the matrix of new forms of life, as the creator of unknown values that are diametrically opposed to the plantation society. In the collective epics written by the maroon people there is an affirmative force that survives and ruptures the whole dialectic between master and slave” (15-16).¹⁴⁵

Here, Touam Bona directly refers to the 'collective epics' of the maroon people as containing an affirmative energy that breaks with the master/slave dialectic by offering a 'matrix for new forms of life'. Whereas the categories of 'small' and 'big', 'long' or 'short' marronage appear to limit the discourse on marronage to the contextual confines in which these categories were first invented – namely the planter's occupation with the calculation of the loss of resources and decision for an appropriate punishment to be inflicted on escaped slaves –, concepts such as sovereign, sociogenic and secessionist marronage immediately *evoke the deep and macro-political nature of these acts of flight*. Put differently these concepts *move out of the colonial discourse* and propose a completely new angle from which the political potential of marronage becomes visible. In the way these notions refer to different ways in which historical maroon polities have been created: through a cooption of the colonial model seeking internal and external stability (sovereign); through constant creativity seeking radically new modes of being together that are, by nature, impermanent or fleeting (sociogenic); and through the breaking free from an existing polity to establish a new polity seeking the creation of a new permanent social order (secessionist), the question for my own study becomes how Glissant took up these characteristics in his own fictional and non-fictional work on marronage? And what does it mean to propose a contemporary movement of marronage out of the capitalist system of domination that has, to some extent grown out of the plantation system, as shown in 1.4.3.?

As I will discuss at greater length in chapter 5, these conceptions directly intervene in debates in political theory by claiming that the plantation system needs to be considered as a unit of political analysis. Despite its historical entanglements in national and geopolitical political systems, the Plantation with a capital P needs to be considered as a totality (see Benitez Rojo in 1.4.3.), a 'body politic' marked by a particular culture, a 'slave culture' (Thompson 2006), a 'state' from which one can secede (Touam Bona), or as a society, where slave owners, slaves and everyone in between

¹⁴⁵ *“En effet, le marronnage y apparaît pleinement comme matrice de formes de vie nouvelles, comme créateur de valeurs inédites diamétralement opposées à celles de la société de plantation. Il y a dans les épopées collectives des peuples marrons une force affirmative qui survient en rupture de toute dialectique du maître et de l’esclave”*, my translation.

these binary social poles form an extreme form of exploitative totalitarian political community.

Measured against the existing definitions of these political terms, these considerations might be deemed problematic. One could, for example, argue that a singular plantation does not meet the criteria of a sovereign state, or that slaves can not be considered as being *part of*, but rather as falling *outside* the plantation society and its polity. One could also claim that maroon communities themselves never acquired the status of an independent nation-state, perhaps with the exception of Haiti. While these concerns are correct from an abstract conceptual and disciplinary point of view, from the perspective of the enslaved, – to whom the confines of the plantation were a 'coherent whole', a totality, even if it was part of a larger empire – the decision to leave the plantation signified a flight into an unknown territory outside the realm of the sovereign, where a new life had to be created. It is only once traditional conceptions of the political, as outlined in 1.2.1, are stretched in this manner that these 'subaltern' forms of political practice can become visible. This is not to cast over the manifold traditions of political studies that study politics below, across and outside the sovereign nation-state, but mainly geared towards pointing out a blind spot in the study of marronage that has only recently been addressed by scholars. Thompson's remark on the centrality of maroon societies, as opposed to only attributing 'society' to the white upper class, is noteworthy in that regard. Against the tendency to hold on to categories that result in down-playing or erasing the agency of slaves he emphasises what a change in perspective from a colonial to a maroon perspective entails: “Of course, from the standpoint of the Maroons it was not a question of living on the fringes of any society but rather of creating a new kind of society, where political, social and other distinctions were not based on ascriptive race and colour criteria” (2006, 11).

The above considerations have already moved the discussion from historical and sociological to matters concerning political theory. In the following sub-section, I will point out how the trivialisation of marronage has also been reproduced in the manner in which the underlying ideas and political forms of maroon communities have been interpreted. The way in which the organisational set-ups of maroon societies has been depicted in political theoretical terms is going to be of interest for the political potential I am going to ascribe to Glissant's marronage in the ensuing sections.

2.1.3. Revolutionary or Restorative? African Political Ideas in Maroon Communities

As shown in 2.1.1., the erasure of slave subjectivity and agency in historical accounts written from the perspective of the coloniser has produced a framework that precludes the possibility of perceiving the very possibility of slave revolts. The disavowal of the world historic importance of the Haitian revolution of 1791 and constitution of 1804 is considered the most overt

expression of this blind spot in colonial or what Alvin O. Thompson refers to as 'white historiography'.¹⁴⁶ Acknowledging slave subjectivity and political agency outside the framework of the conception of 'social death'¹⁴⁷ a place from which no politics can be created, is however but a first step out of a multilayered *cul de sac* produced by colonial historiography. One can, for example, make the case along with Yarimar Bonilla that the academic discourse of exceptionalism around the Haitian Revolution as 'the only successful slave revolt in world history' effectively serves to uphold the claim that "state overthrow is viewed as a singular measure of accomplishment" (2015, 45). By endorsing this specific standard for 'real' revolutionary political action, a plethora of political practices disappear from view. Analogously, the fact that most maroon communities existed only 'ephemerally' and have been judged as "largely a futile effort", in the words of Schweninger (quoted by Thompson 2006, 328), because they did not survive or turn into sovereign nation-states, risks disavowing their political and theoretical potentiality. Thompson argues in that vein that, only when all of these dispersed movements of flight are seen as a whole, across their complete reach across time and space, can the argument be made that:

"the longevity of marronage itself constituted a significant aspect of Blacks' struggles for freedom [as] a quest to recapture the beauty of the human form, which had been reduced to a work machine through slavery that created a disjunction between the enslaved person's inner self (soul, spirit) and outer self (body)" (2006, 2).

Thompson continues this line of thought to argue against perceiving the history of marronage as a tragedy or a failure, but rather as a triumph for the formerly enslaved (17) that eventually contributed to the overthrow of the system of slavery (329). While the assertion that marronage brought about the downfall of slavery will remain difficult to prove either right or wrong, the decision to move away from a relatively isolated focus on individual acts of flight towards perceiving marronage as a generalised movement of resistance, spanning an entire continent and several centuries, suggests a new perspective on the scale of marronage as a tradition of resistance.

This insight can be brought into conversation with an ongoing discussions on whether maroon communities were by nature 'restorationist' or 'revolutionary'. In his book *From Rebellion to Revolution* (1992), Eugene D. Genovese, for instance, argued that maroons attempted to recreate the African societies from which they were once violently removed, and deemed their actions backward, non-revolutionary and 'outside the mainstream of history'. While Genovese measures 'revolutionary action' according to standards set by the French Revolution, it would be possible to merge his claim about the maroons ambitions to 're-create' African communities in the Americas

¹⁴⁶See Susan Buck-Morss' influential study *Hegel, Haiti and the Universal* (2009) of the Haitian revolution as a case in point.

¹⁴⁷See Roberts' critique of Arendt on this aspect in his chapter *The Disavowal of Slave Agency* (2015).

with the claim advanced, among others, by Werner Zips (1999), that the African world-views and philosophies held by most of the maroons were incompatible with the plantation system. Extending this argument further would imply that marronage as a political movement radically questioned the system of slavery in the very act of flight. From this angle, the decision to flee from the plantation and to create a new community elsewhere would have to be considered revolutionary in the sense that it created a fundamental change in political power and organization by a population against a ruler as a result of oppression, which would be in line with at least one prevalent understanding of revolution.¹⁴⁸ In Thompson's view, maroon societies were creative or 'new' in that they were made up of people from a variety of different cultures (2006, 324), or what Glissant would term *creole*. Against the argument that they 'merely reproduced' African political traditions in the Caribbean, Thompson insists that the institutions and practices of government, economy and spiritual life in these communities need to be seen as a resulting from a similarly diverse mix of traditions.

Against the charge that maroon societies were not politically innovative, Thompson points out that, on the most basic level, they differed from plantation system in that they were 'born out of the quest for freedom' while the function of the plantation system was a quest for material gain which in turn necessitated enslavement (2006, 211). Against the charge that maroon societies were organised along 'pre-modern' political ideas, and were thus not able to meet the egalitarian standard introduced by the French Revolution, Thompson insists that maroon communities, although they were marked by social hierarchies, were not structured along similarly hereditary class structures, as those upheld by the colonial states (211-12). For Thompson it would therefore be inadequate and misleading to dismiss modes of governance among maroon societies as 'despotic' (212), and maroon leaders as particularly cruel or sadistic, as several colonial accounts suggest (215). In that vein it is worth remembering that these communities required extraordinary military leadership to survive against constant assaults by colonial armies that were superior in material terms (213), and that this kind of leadership not only required military but also linguistic and social capabilities to foster strong multi-ethnic networks (213-14). A particularly important skill that characterised maroon leaders was their spiritual ability to commune with the ancestors or have the powers of "medicine men" or "women" (230). Thompson moreover finds that several maroon communities endorsed elective principles that were altogether absent from the authoritarian nature of colonial states (218).¹⁴⁹ These societies, as Thompson points out, appeared to be "somewhat like a confederation of autonomous communities [...] It may, in fact, be that all large communities were divided into sets

148 In the realm of political science, revolution commonly refers to "any major transformation that occurs simultaneously on the social and the political level, upsetting expectations and conformities that were sufficiently well established to define all important forms of association under the preceding order" (Scruton 2007, 598)

149 In the maroon society of Palmares, for instance, an open ballot was held where inhabitants elected one of their men to hold an office for life. Since this leader effectively shared his authority over legal and military matters, with 'checks and balances' through tradition and religious taboo, Palmares has been referred to as a 'Republic' (Thompson 2006, 218-22).

of 'villages' or combinations of villages and 'towns', depending on their demographic and territorial size, and governed by consensus” (223).

As to the question of where these democratic political ideas came from, Thompson points to African political models, where African rulers sought consensus among members of their council, where power was shared among senior personnel (221). In the case of the Nduka maroons, Thompson, for instance, describes their villages as having a “strong democratic and egalitarian ethos”, where palavers were mainly ruled by older men, but where the views of women and younger men were also taken into consideration (221). Because these political models could not have been patterned on European models at the time, “It was therefore either *sui generis* or based largely on African models” (222).¹⁵⁰

Outside the proper historical influence of African political thought on the 'continental movement of marronage' outlined in this sub-section, the relevance of African political and philosophical ideas will feature as a repeated sub-theme throughout this thesis. Positing the African archive as an important point of reference for Glissant's relational thought, as I set out to do here at various moments in this study (1.2.3, 4.3.2, 5.2., 5.4.), is not meant to imply a singular of influences on what I perceive to be a fundamentally creole or syncretic political thought. Put differently, it is not meant to 'dilute' Glissant's thought “into a general thing called 'African'” as cautioned by George Lamming which would disavow the fact that Glissant was speaking from a distinctly Caribbean place (Scott and Lamming 2002, 122). Instead, the general impetus of foregrounding this particular philosophical connection is to emphasise a connection that Glissant's oeuvre forcefully tried to re-affirm, not in the form of a physical return to Africa to uncover its alleged mysteries (Condé 2012), but counter the systematic disavowal of the political theoretical importance of African political thought. The disavowal of the relevance of African traditions of thought, which is implied when the political practices of maroon societies are deemed conservative or restorative, is also countered in this process.¹⁵¹ My own understanding of Glissant's marronage thus builds on the 'revolutionary nature' of maroon societies and their innovative nature as deriving from a mix of African political ideas, but one that also took Indigenous, Indian and European political thought into consideration as they were changed and adapted to the Caribbean context. Although in most cases these historical maroon communities did or could not attempt to 'overthrow' the colonial regime, for lack of military equipment, the fact that they did not reproduce the plantation system, with its racialised structure, and practice of monoculture, that they practiced a politics based on consensus, which necessarily

¹⁵⁰Thompson follows Thoden van Velzen's view that they were modelled on “segmented (or so-called stateless) societies of southeast Nigera – Igbo (Ibo), Ijo (Ijaw), Efik – and the Delta” (2006, 222).

¹⁵¹For Thompson it is unfathomable that enslaved people did not possess a revolutionary consciousness, “that they only sought to gain freedom for themselves but did not have a collective awareness beyond their own project” in his view. Such a view would reduce the issue to an absurdity in his view, “since no revolution ever begins with such a level of awareness; rather, it starts with an awareness of a few people and, as it progresses, embraces a wider circle” (2006, 206).

entailed a geographic limitation into smaller 'manageable villages' is noteworthy for an exploration of alternative political institutions through the lens of Glissant's politics of relation (5.3.).

Section Summary

This section demonstrated the discursive background in response to which Glissant developed his own work on marronage. As I have shown at the onset of this chapter, colonial historiography on the Caribbean turned into an outstanding political problem for Glissant since it can be perceived as functioning as the 'founding myth' sanctioning the (neo)colonial status quo Glissant perceived Martinique to be caught up in. This founding myth can be considered to form part of a larger or meta-myth of the West as a political project geared towards expansion and ownership of territories that Glissant referred to as the evolutionary narrative of History with a capital H in which the West is always the centre and the standard according to which the developments of communities are measured that are defined as Non-Western. In the case of marronage, the colonial founding myth of the Caribbean effectively worked to exclude, trivialise and invisibilise the figure of the maroon as a way of *normalising the plantation system*, and the capitalist economic system that emerged from it. As this section demonstrated, this exclusion can both take the form of undermining the historic significance of marronage as a continental movement by referring to numeric measurements (size/duration). It can, however, also be produced by employing the very concepts used by the plantocracy (*petit/grand*). A crucial aspect that goes missing in these accounts, is the *inherent revolutionary nature of the movement of marronage*, which only becomes visible by employing alternative concepts and perspectives. Roberts' notion of sociogenic marronage, in this respect, carries the potential to open the view onto the intricate entanglement of marronage with the creation of new communities based on epistemologies that differ fundamentally from the capitalist logic underlying the plantation system. With regards to the world-views and organisational structures created by maroons, these findings also directly provoked an engagement with African political traditions. These traditions, which decolonial scholars have identified as having been a dominant force in historical maroon communities tend to rely on relational ontologies that will remain a repeated theme throughout this thesis. An awareness of these debates forms the necessary background in order to study the kind of intervention Glissant undertook into colonial discourses in the remainder of this chapter. As I will show in the following section (2.2.), his response to the colonial founding myth of the Caribbean took place both on a textual or discursive level, as well as on a non-textual level to which I will turn in 2.3.

2.2. (Re-)Making History – Glissant's 'Prophetic Vision of the Past'

*“It's no mystery, We're making history,
It's no mystery, We're winning, victory”*
– Linton Kwesi Johnson, *Making History* (1983)

As shown in the previous section, Glissant's engagement with marronage emerged from a critical engagement with colonial modes of historiography that have tended to disavow the historical importance and the political creativity inherent in movements of marronage. In this section, I will demonstrate how Glissant worked to re-insert the figure of the maroon into a different kind of history, as forming part of a new 'founding myth', around which a new kind of community can potentially be imagined that is no longer solely defined in opposition to the project of colonisation but based on a different sense of worldliness. As I will argue, exploring the political implications of marronage warrants an awareness of Glissant's conception of history and the position of marronage within that history. In the ensuing study of these aspects, I will focus on the following: Glissant's approach to colonial history and his critique thereof (2.2.1.), his notion of a 'prophetic vision of the past', as a way of selectively engaging with history in order to create political ideas that can be of use in the attempt of building a different future (2.2.2.); and a demonstration of how Glissant applied these two aspects to the particular case of Martinique (2.2.3.).

2.2.1. Against History with a capital H – *Le discours antillais* and A New Set of Historical Points of Reference

This sub-section depicts how Glissant proposed an alternative set of reference points for the construction of Caribbean history, a work that is mainly contained in his fictional oeuvre, and is theorised in a more overt fashion in *Le discours antillais* (1981). As I will show, these reference points depart from the Western method of counting time according to a linear chronology marked by the occurrence of large-scale conflicts. Instead, Glissant's mode of historiography measures time with reference to natural events and the life-span of a human being as denoting more fluid 'centuries'.

As I noted at the onset of this chapter, one of Glissant's main concerns was to critically engage with colonial modes of writing history, specifically concerning Martinique and the Caribbean. He expanded this critique to encompass a more general problematisation of Western history that has been problematised by several postcolonial scholars.¹⁵² Apart from the colonial view that reserves the agency to 'make history' as an exclusive privilege of Europeans, trying to uncover

¹⁵²See Johannes Fabian's essay *Time and the Other* (2014).

historical traces in this context is furthermore complicated by the colonisers deliberate attempts at 'wiping out the past' and replacing it with their own version of it, as Fanon famously claimed in the epigraph to the previous section. As Glissant pointed out in *Le discours antillais*, after the colonisers' destruction of the very possibility of understanding Caribbean history, the re-discovery of the past becomes an urgent task for those in subaltern positions, and the maroon figure becomes an important historical point of reference in this context (CD 13). "The duty of the writer", for Glissant, is to "explore this obsession (with non-history) to show its relevance" (CD 63), by digging into the collective memory, and identify points of violence and reveal creative energies of which the maroon is one (CD 64).

In the French colonies, the 'obsession with non-history' is frequently associated with the infamous indoctrination that the shared ancestors of all the people colonised by the French were the Gauls.¹⁵³ In addition to this, the oral nature of most African historical archives made them particularly vulnerable to the violent rupture brought about by slavery. How the written word came to dominate oral traditions of recording history in a colonial context remained a central issue for Glissant. In the novel *Ormerod* he referred to this problematic by showing how family history in the French Antilles was more than a sentimental tradition, it was a question of power. Whereas the white *békés* and Indians both carried their family books with them, allowing them to 'climb up the spiral of time' in Glissant's words (OD 63), slaves of African descent were forced to forget their ancestral lineages over several generations, thus breaking the vital chain that connects the living to the dead and those not yet born which is of fundamental importance in African cosmologies. Glissant's work on history responds to this problematic. As I will show in the following, Glissant's understanding of and response to this charge was not only empirical, which would be to demonstrate that most Caribbeans *come from Africa* and that African civilisations have rich histories, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to change the very conception of history at its basis. History or world history, in Glissant's view, is no longer the sole property of Europe, and does not take the form of a straight evolutionary line. It is, most of all, no longer a single story but one that is made up of an infinity of *histories*. Unearthing this plethora of histories beneath the dominant discourse on History, and bringing them into relation with one another without evaluating them according their relative importance, is among the central occupations of the poet for Glissant.

Where Do We Begin? Nature as a Marker of Time

The opening pages of *Le discours antillais* are instructive in their demonstration of Glissant's ambition to uncover what he calls a 'Caribbean history of Martinique' as opposed to a 'French history of Martinique'.

¹⁵³See for example the TV documentary by Xavier-Marie Bonnot et Dorothée Lachaud (2012).

After presenting a general overview of French colonial history's view of Martinican history, beginning with the 'discovery of Martinique by Columbus in 1502 and ending with the doctrine of economic assimilation in 1975, Glissant remarks "Once this chronological table has been set up and completed, the whole history of Martinique remains to be unraveled. The whole Caribbean history of Martinique remains to be discovered" (CD 13). The imposition of History 'from above' in Martinique has been performed by referencing external agents and far away places, such as wars and crisis that took place in the French metropole. But the chronology that shapes dominant Western conceptions of the past, for instance the events of the two so-called 'World Wars', has a radically different significance in the Caribbean. Whereas some wars fought between European powers were hardly noticed by the majority of Martinicans, some significant events in Martinique were never noticed by colonial historians.¹⁵⁴ Glissant harbours a similar scepticism towards the Western notion of time as being marked by evolution and ruptures in his engagement with the official abolition of slavery in the French Antilles in 1848. Glissant argues that this year can hardly be considered as marking a significant historic change into a before and after slavery (OD 116). Instead of supporting the idea of a radical rupture after the liberation of slaves in 1848, which French historiography attributes to the actions of the white French abolitionist Victor Schoelcher – thereby effectively occluding such historical moments as the uprising following the imprisonment of the slave Romain that has also been attributed as bringing about the end of slavery on May 22, 1848¹⁵⁵ –, Glissant's novels in particular emphasise a general sense of continuity on the part of the formerly enslaved after the institutionalisation of the abolition (LCDC 105). But where to begin with writing history outside a framework imposed by others?

A first alternative point of reference Glissant's work of fiction suggests are natural events occurring on the island, such as the eruption of the Mount Pelée volcano that destroyed the town of Saint Pierre and all of its inhabitants in 1902. Nature thus turns into more reliable marker of the beginning of a new era than the dates of distant battles. In the absence of monuments and books, the memory of the islands' histories is, in this vein, said to be carried by tree trunks, lianes and roots (OD 256), or to the ocean, the coast or the forest as denoting centuries (LQS 344).¹⁵⁶ Glissant's often cited claim that the "Our landscape is its own monument: the trace that signifies it is traceable within it. It is all history" (CD 11). can also, in part, be understood in this sense.

'An neg sé an siec' – A Lifetime is a Century

A second alternative point of reference for a decolonial historiography in Glissant's fictional

¹⁵⁴Even in cases where individual battles between maroons and colonial armies were recorded, like the battle of Rabot in 1794/1795 to which Glissant refers (OD 49), no detailed information on these conflicts were recorded (OD 35), therefore leaving few traces of marronage in current accounts of history (MG 86).

¹⁵⁵See the section on *May 22* in *Le discours antillais* (CD 251).

¹⁵⁶In the novel *Mahagony*, for instance, the trees are active observers and participants in the plot (MG 127).

work is the life-span of a human being. Several of his novels are structured along the life-times of individuals that stand for entire 'centuries', as in the phrase expressed by the character Papa Longoué in *Le quatrieme siecle*, 'this negro is a century', which is also listed as epigraph for *Le discours antillais* as a 'Martinican expression': "A black man is a century" (*An neg sé an siec*). This places Glissant's history of the Caribbean in a general historical framework spanning four to five centuries, a time-span loosely marked by Christopher Columbus' 'discovery of the new world' at the end of the 15th century, but reliant on a unit of measurement that differs from that of the numeric unit of the year. Although Glissant would later suggest an even longer historical framework in which he placed his fictional and theoretical work, – such as a precolonial fictional town of Onkolo in the 5th century BC (4.3.1.), the prehistoric rock paintings as belonging to a universal poetic tradition (UNRDM 46-47), or even the geological formation of the Caribbean archipelago as the beginning of Caribbean history (OD 362). The insistence on a sense of time that is specific to the Caribbean is remarkable in so far as it marks a difference from African, European but also continental American historiographies. For Glissant, it is something that is related yet different.

As I will make more explicit in chapter 4, this practice of writing history as making history has particular political implications. By proposing a different set of historical points of reference, Glissant opted to not only write a counter-discourse that aimed at proving the colonial discourse, and its claim that the colonial project is a 'civilising mission', wrong. Instead of operating with the same concepts of time and standards of civilisational achievements to make the point that 'we took part in History as well' his work set out to change the very terms of the debate by replacing a singular History produced with the 'other' and 'elsewhere' as central points of reference with a multitude of histories produced in which the 'self' and one's own place are the main point of reference.¹⁵⁷ Instead of receiving the account of the history of one's place and communities from others, Glissant's poetic intention places a fundamental emphasis on the fact that *histories are made*, invented, and imagined as much as they are informed by written records or physical traces of past events. By contributing to a collection of this multiplicity of histories and epics – narratives that have remained hidden under the master narrative of the West, Glissant effectively worked towards creating an alternative founding myth for what he called world-communities.

2.2.2. Intuition and the Relational Imagination – Glissant's Philosophy of History

Instead of composing historical treatise himself, Glissant relied on the tools offered by fiction and poetry to produce a different historical account, freed from the division between fact and fiction upheld by the academic discipline of History. Accordingly, in this sub-section I argue that

¹⁵⁷On the necessity of seriously taking Indigenous conceptions of time into account when dealing with settler colonial contexts see for example Mark Rifkin's book *Beyond Settler Time* (2017).

interrogating a set of his novels (*Le quatrième siècle*, *La case du commandeur*, *Mahagony* and *Ormerod*) serve to best illustrate Glissant's practice of 'making history'. While I focussed on the alternative set of temporal references Glissant suggested in the previous sub-section, I will now investigate the *sense of time* at the basis of Glissant's historiography and point out some key actors tasked with keeping track of time from this perspective. As will become apparent in the process, Glissant's perception of time does not rely on neat a succession of facts but on sensations, feelings and impressions that unsettle the oppositions between fact and fiction, verifiable records and works of the imagination.

The historiographic method Glissant employed in these books appears to be based as much on circumstantial necessity – merely engaging with written sources produced by the colonisers would be inadequate, which forces one to take oral sources and 'natural witnesses' also into account – as much as it is based on Glissant's own epistemology in which the realms between fact and fiction are not neatly separated from one another. In *Mahagony* he writes for instance: “*La chose est arrivée. La chose réelle qui est la même que la chose imaginée, en conséquence*”¹⁵⁸ (MG 125-26), and in *Ormerod* he repeats the same conviction: “*il serait vain de chercher différence entre ce qui est et ce qui s'imagine*”¹⁵⁹ (OD 47). The interaction between the young Mathieu Béluse and the old *quimboiseur* Papa Longoué, in the foreground of *Le quatrième siècle*, also illustrates the tension between the traditions of orally preserved history against the historiography of written records, and the necessity of moving beyond a belief in established historical records operating with facts, separations and causality. Whereas Mathieu keeps asking Papa Longoué to explain the history of Martinique in terms of causality and chronology, ('because', 'thereafters', 'befores' and 'whys', LQS 47), Papa Longoué insists that, “*il ne faut pas suivre les faits avec logique mais deviner, prévoir ce qui s'est passé*” (one should not approach these facts with logic but needs to guess, imagine what happened' (LQS 57-58). As Glissant evokes in this fictional conversation, transcending the historical divisions of official eras and social groups, brings with it the danger of unsettling established conceptions of identity and time as well as the differentiation between fact and fiction. Papa Longoué's historical account, for instance, does not adhere to Mathieu's expectations of what role his ancestors played in the past. The young Mathieu does not want to accept that some of his ancestors preferred living on the plantation while the Longoué ancestors lived freely as maroons on the hills, or that some of the enslaved fought on their masters behalf (LQS 37).

In addition to these differences from the dominant mode of historiography of his time, Glissant also proposed a different vision for how history evolves over the *longue durée*, one that differs from a linear chronology upheld by the Western tradition. Instead of imagining history as a

¹⁵⁸“The thing happened. The real thing which is, as a consequence, at the same time the thing that is imagined”, my translation.

¹⁵⁹“It would be futile to look for the difference between that which is and that which one imagines”, my translation.

'neatly aligned string of pearls' (OD 72), it takes the form of a spiral¹⁶⁰ that descends into increasingly opaque depths. Glissant expressed this conception in *Ormerod* where he wrote:

*“Nos temps n'engendrent pas de lignée, ni nos terres n'ont érigé de centre, et de même nos listes, n'honorent en rien les filiations et les générations. La femme au l'homme ou la bête au l'herbe quelles nomment apparaissent sans prémices ni héritage. Elles ont la terre et la poussière pour asile et ni fréquentent pas les grands éclats”*¹⁶¹ (OD 68).

Not only does Glissant's vision of time no longer advance in a straight 'time line' but it is marked by repetitions at points where the spiral appears to come full circle, and the sovereignty of the line is also broken up into fragments. Since the historian in Glissant's view has to deal with the fact that there are large chunks of time where what happened will remain unknown, he uses the metaphor of jumping from rock to rock to describe an appropriate approach to history. In *Ormerod* he explained this practice in the following terms:

*“le temps sautait-il de roche en roche. Nous en ramassions ça et là les petits graviers, autour de ces gros rochers, de la Traite à la Plantation, à la grave Urne des illusions, ou nous avons dératé nos pieds, ces gravillons dévalaient entre nos orteils, autant qu'entre nos doigts, comme un sable pilé”*¹⁶² (OD 71).

This quote implies that there are big and small rocks, pebbles and sand that runs through ones fingers if one wants to engage with Caribbean history. No longer walking on solid ground 'down memory lane', this view evokes a more humble relation with historic certainty or truth. Instead of aspiring towards absolute certainty there is a hesitant, or what Glissant later called 'trembling', approach to knowledge which Glissant referred to in the expression of *“Assuré pas peut-être”* (perhaps sure/not certain perhaps).

Who is a Historian Now? A New Method to Keep Track of Time

Glissant's conception of history has a set of methodological consequences which I want to sketch out in the following. In the absence of monuments and no written records (OD 150-55) to bear witness of what happened centuries ago¹⁶³ – up to the point that even the ruins of colonial buildings are covered by the tropical vegetation (MG 18) –, the ability and practice of 'reading traces' becomes a key analogy Glissant uses to describe the practice of writing history in the

160 Mathieu about Glissant (*le chroniqueur*): *“Mon ami le chroniqueur avait voulu descendre en spirale, le plus à fond possible, dans le tohu-bohu du temps que nous vivions”* (My friend the chronicler wanted to descend down the spirale, as deep as possible, into the tohuwabohu of the times that we live in) (MG 214)

161 “Our times do not produce lines, our lands have not erected any centres, and our lists do not honour any of the filiations and generations. The woman or the man or the animal or the herb which they name appear without origination or heritage. They have the land and the dust as asylum and do not frequent the big eruptions“, my translation.

162 “the times jump from rock to rock. We collect small stones here and there, around the big mountains of the Slave Trade and the Plantation, to the serious urn of illusions, where we have misplaced our feet, these gravels get stuck in between our toes, and in between our fingers, like crushed sand“, my translation. A similar formulation is included in *Mahagony* (MG 158).

163 The distrust Glissant harbours towards 'scientific' methods of uncovering the past (archaeology etc.) is made explicit in several of his novels. To illustrate how macabre the scientific approach to history can be, Glissant tells the story of how, a century after the maroon population of Saint Lucia disappeared a veterinarian counted the declining amount of human victims of the 'cribo' snake (1905 – 21, 1920 – 3, 1931 – 2, 1932 – 0) to estimate its declining population (OD 36).

Caribbean. This idea is, for example, illustrated in *Ormerod* in a scene where Nestor'o flies across the island of St. Lucia on an airplane looking for traces of the maroon warrior Flore Gaillard. From the distance of a plane, none of her traces will be revealed (OD 59), seen from the sky, “everything is mixed up” (OD 275). This implies that a 'distant reading' will not suffice to reveal any traces of the past, as the character Mycéa points out about the tendency of focussing on major historical events and thereby neglecting the minute details of peoples lived experiences using the analogy of 'big and small plants': “*Quand vous avez fréquenté les grands plants vous ne comprenez pas tout de suite les misères ni les bonheurs des petits herbages*”¹⁶⁴ (MG 187). This is precisely where the poet in Glissant's view has a role to play. The practice of paying attention to the 'small plants', meaning to the lived experience of people who have lived in the past and who are alive today, and to write about them, is, in turn, similar to leaving traces in the woods. In the same way that research is the search for lost traces, writing is the creation of traces that might take time until a generation emerges that is able to decipher them.¹⁶⁵

In *Ormerod*, the main character Nestor'o employs a Glissantian approach as a historian in his ambition to: “*confondre, mélanger la forme et la voyance et les mille d'odeurs d'eau et d'aridité d'un Morne à l'autre*”¹⁶⁶ while searching for the traces left by the maroon leader Flore Gaillard (OD 73). Once it becomes clear that he will not be able to find any visible traces of her and her maroon gang, the novel explores different sets of method that include 'dreaming up' some of the major conflicts in which she was involved in.¹⁶⁷ Contrasting the methods of envisioning, dreaming or imagining maroon conflicts with established scientific methods of conflict studies, Glissant writes:

“*Pas une bataille ne vaut d'être contée, d'être rêvée, aucune d'être étudiée, la science historique des conflits, c'est à dire de leur déroulement sinon de leur causes, n'aurait du concourir qu'a mieux pouvoir les éviter. Cette science améliore au contraire son objet. Rêver la bataille de Rabot, c'est la dévêtir de son linge glorieux de fumées haggardes, l'alléger du grondement des charges et de l'odeur suffocante des canonnades, pour ne retenir que cela : l'instinct de vie qui prend le pas sur la rigide connaissance des armes. Mais l'instinct est-il plus louable, en matière d'extermination ?*”¹⁶⁸ (OD 147).

I understand this quote to mean that, not only do conflict studies overlook maroon wars as not being worth to be studied, they are also mainly geared towards improving the art of warfare, the

164 “When you have frequented the big plants you will not at all understand neither the misery nor the happiness of the small plants”, my translation.

165 “*L'écriture est une trace dans les Bois*” (OD 112), “*les hommes ne sèment que des traces qui perissent, mais leur grandeur est d'étudier les traces qui peri, pour retrouver leur langage*” (OD 226), my translations.

166 “confuse, mix the form and fortune tellings of thousands of smells of water and aridity from one Morne to another”, my translation.

167 Glissant wrote in that regard “*(les historiens) montrent comment se mêle l'archipel, quand même ils ne pensent pas à rêver la forme*” ((historians) show how the archipel bends but they do not think of dreaming its form) (OD 50).

168 “None of these battles are worth to be told, recounted, dreamed up, or studied, the historical science of conflicts, meaning their unravelling or their causes, did not matter other than to avoid them. This science on the contrary improves its object. To dream the battle of Rabot means to undress its glorious gown of haggard smoke, to lighten the grumbling of its fire and the suffocating smell of canons to remember but this: the instinct of life outlives the rigid knowledge of weapons. But is the instinct more praiseworthy in matters of extermination?”, my translation.

techniques of different arms to better fight the enemy. The practice of dreaming them up, on the other hand, both reveals that the human instinct of survival is superior to the 'knowledge of arms', and is equal in its ability to defeat the enemy. As Glissant points out in *Ormerod*, the art of dreaming up the past is not limited to the 'distant' past of several centuries ago. Drawing a parallel between the impossibility of knowing with certainty what happened in the 18th with the 20th century he writes that the reliance on a “à-peu-près” (more-or-less) logic can in part be attested to the structural interruption of flows of information in the Caribbean. In the 1970s or 1980s information reaching the Antilles first had to pass through Paris or the *Agence France Press* (OD 187) and was filtered by the colonial governments up to the point that one could be in 1943 and not know anything about 1934 (OD 213). Living with this perpetual lack of information or facts, Glissant drew a parallel between the history of Flore Gaillard's gang of maroons in 1793 with the revolution in Grenada of 1983 (OD 188) (2.3.1.). In both cases trustworthy sources are hard to come by. In the case of Grenada, Glissant thus casts the owner of a barbershop Mister Eleazo, and not a trained historian, as the centre of knowledge collection and dissemination about the revolution (OD 206).

Political Implications of Glissant's 'Prophetic Vision of the Past'

After having outlined the larger philosophy of history emerging from Glissant's fictional work, I will now turn to questions concerning the political implications of Glissant's sense of time. What is the main political difference between the historical narrative produced by the colonisers, which were mainly based on written records, and the model of history espoused by Glissant, which relies on alternative modes of engaging with the past such as imagining it or dreaming it up? In the previous part I have argued that a main difference is Glissant's investment in constructing an alternative founding myth for a world-community that is characterised by a multiplicity of epics and thus seeks to replace the evolutionary narrative proposed by the Western myth of a singular world History that, in essence, legitimises the dominance of European powers over the rest of the world. Another crucial aspect of Glissant's engagement with history is less geared towards uncovering histories that were denied by this master narrative, and is more directly invested in the imagination of alternative futures.

His notion of a 'prophetic vision of the past', to which I will now turn, is of crucial importance in this respect. In an immediate sense, it troubles the neat distinctions between past, present and future. As I have outlined above, Glissant's approach to history is not that of a historian but of a story-teller, who makes use of existing historical accounts in order to create a history that fills a void and that is, above all, designed to be of use for a future-oriented political project. As Neil Roberts argues with regards to the *Nègre marron* monument in Haiti, which is considered to be the most visible contemporary memorial to marronage: “The *Unknown Maroon* conveys Edouard

Glissant's notion of 'a prophetic vision of the past,' a vision not locked in the grammar of historicism but rather conjuring a mental picture utilizing past ideals for imagined transhistorical politics“ (2015, 12).¹⁶⁹ As Glissant wrote in 1961 in the first preface to his play *Monsieur Toussaint* which is dedicated to the figure of Toussaint Louverture (1743-1803) and the Haitian Revolution of 1971:

“the present work is not politically inspired; rather it is linked to what I would call, paradoxically, *a prophetic vision of the past*. For those whose history has been reduced by others to darkness and despair, the recovery of the near or distant past is imperative. To renew acquaintance with one's history, obscured or obliterated by others, is to relish fully the present, for the experience of the present, stripped of its roots in time, yields only hollow delights. This is a poetic endeavour” (MT 15-16).

The apparent contrast Glissant conjures up in this passage between politics and poetics ('not politically inspired', 'a poetic endeavour') in my view needs to be understood against the background of the politically charged atmosphere of the early 1960s, in which Glissant not only overtly advocated for the autonomy of Martinique but was also involved in the *Société Africaine de Culture*, which actively supported the struggle for independence of African colonies. 'Political inspiration' could in this context be read as an overt allegiance to a particular political party, liberation movement or ideology. Deliberately removing his play from this established notion of 'political writing', Glissant appears to be interested in alerting the reader or spectator of the play to a larger historical and political framework in which he wanted *Monsieur Toussaint* to be placed. By dedicating his work to “those whose history has been reduced by others to darkness and despair“ and insisting that “the recovery of the near or distant past is imperative“, Glissant clearly took sides in the anticolonial struggle without advocating a clear political agenda using the grammar of national liberation. By presenting Louverture as a highly ambivalent figure, torn between the traditions of the West and of the Haitian people, haunted by ghosts and isolated in his cell in the Chateaux de Joux prison in France, Glissant deliberately went against an uncritical celebration of Louverture, which might be part of the reason why the play has received such scant recognition until recently.¹⁷⁰ In Glissant's depiction of Louverture's tragic end, the multiplicity of philosophic traditions that came together in the fate of this historic figure come to the fore, they include the Enlightenment tradition as well as African ontologies revealed in Glissant's depiction of “casual communication with the dead” (MT 16).

In my view, it is precisely Louverture's symbolic position at the crossroads of these different cultures that led Glissant to cast him as a 'black hero' around which a new Caribbean epic could be

¹⁶⁹Note Benedict Anderson's thoughts on the importance of 'unknown soldiers' for nation-building projects in this regard. In *Imagined Communities* he writes: “No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers. [...] Yet void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly national imaginings. (This is why so many different nations have such tombs without feeling any need to specify the nationality of their absent occupants. What else could they be but Germans, Americans, Argentinians ...?) (1983, 9-10).

¹⁷⁰In 2020 Living and the Dead Ensemble adapted Glissant's theatre play for the film *Ouverture*.

told, an epic that could serve as the narrative basis for a regional political project. While Louverture occupied a central position, his political project does not remain singular but is complemented and contrasted by the voices of the 'living dead' with which he communicates (Roberts 2015, 165). As Neil Roberts points out, among these dead the voice of Mackandal plays an important role. Mackandal had a starkly different conception of freedom to Louverture and whose name, as Roberts points out, was synonymous with marronage in pre-revolutionary Haiti (2015, 165). The play shows that, as a Caribbean epic, the story of the Haitian Revolution would have to include an awareness of the conflicts and solidarities of a variety of political elements composing this tragedy as inseparable from one another. As Glissant outlined in a new preface to the play in 2004, on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Haitian 1884 Constitution:

“In truth, Toussaint and Dessalines, and all the actors in this epic, are inseparable. The realization of such a historic event (the first successful resistance against all forms of colonialism; the first black state in the Americas; the advent of Africa, source of inspiration, on the New World scene) could not have rested on the will of a single individual. The grandeur of Toussaint's vision and the decisive actions of Dessalines complete each other” (MT 12).

By framing his play in these terms, Glissant emphasised that it was not designed to be oppositional or 'against the French' in a narrowly 'political' sense, but that the poetic nature of his project consisted of a creative attempt of imagining an epic that could serve as the foundation for a future community that would have to be inclusive and marked by a diversity of political traditions.

The notion of a 'prophetic vision of the past', which appears in this context for the first time in Glissant's work, is important in so far as it openly acknowledges that Glissant's engagement with history was not committed to factual correctness but to a political project that borrows from the past to envision a different future. As is particularly evident in novels such as *Le quatrième siècle* or *La case du commandeur*, which span the timeframe of several generations, 'the present' is a period containing more than 400 years for Glissant, a time period in which his fictional characters (both in the very structure of the novels and in the narratives they depict) maintain ongoing relations with the dead in their repeated attempts at finding a way out of the dead-end in which Martinican society is heading, due to 'the curse of not knowing the land before'. Glissant's prophetic vision of the past was not primarily concerned with prophesying what will happen in the future, through divine inspiration or revelation, but – and this particularly concerns Glissant's treatment of the maroon figure – is a call for recognising that marronage warrants to be recovered from history as a relevant political strategy for the present. Glissant's repeated movements into the past, movements which tend to take the form of a zigzag motion between 'present and past', can in this context be themselves cast as a form of marronage. In a context where the domination shaping the contemporary moment has succeeded in preventing the articulation of actual political alternatives,

what Santos refers to as the “idea that there is not alternative to the status quo” (2019, 132), Glissant proposes that the move out of this moment and into another one is a productive decision to gain strength and find new ideas that can be put into practice in the present. John E. Drabinski and Marisa Parham add the following thoughts this interpretation of Glissant's engagement with history:

“Prophets speak against kings. This is part of the tradition of prophecy. For Glissant in particular, this means that a prophetic vision of the past is fundamentally anti-colonial, working against all that would figure as authority and authoritarian. In the place of the authoritarian, we instead find in Glissant's work the affirmation of a multiplicity of roots, the mangrove and the rhizome as figures for both composite culture and the meaning of subjectivity” (2015, 4).

The figure of the prophet can thus be read as a maroon of a special kind, an argument that I will revisit in section 2.3. with a more immediate focus on the aspect of performance tied to Glissant's 'flight into the past'.

With regards to the considerations outlined in the previous sub-section, *Monsieur Toussaint* is also of interest in that it deals with the Haitian revolution, which is frequently cited as a singular historical event¹⁷¹ or as an ideal case of what Roberts calls sovereign marronage. Instead of affirming this hierchisation, my reading of the play would place *Monsieur Toussaint* as being part of a much larger engagement with the phenomenon of marronage that essentially breaks with the categorisations of small, grand, sovereign and sociogenic marronage and a singular focus on successful or unsuccessful revolutionary action. Instead, as I will argue at greater length in the following chapters, it could be seen as *a performance of intellectual or epistemic marronage* in the way it moves away from traditional oppositional politics and seeks to create a new community in writing and organisational actions. This invention on a textual level is thus intimately connected to an extra-textual dimension, which the genre of the theatre play enacts in a particularly visible manner through the 'real life' interactions between actors and audience, a particular mode of political practice which I will engage with at a later point in this study (3.3.2.).¹⁷²

The Vital Importance of Being Aware of Cross-Temporal Relations

In addition to the 'prophetic' strand of Glissant's relationship with history, a less idiosyncratic aspect is the awareness of how the past informs the present and prospects for the future, an aspect that is also particularly present in his fictional work. Developing an awareness of these temporal entanglements is important for Glissant, firstly, with regards to the immediate history that resulted in racialised social inequalities in the Antilles and, secondly, concerning a more

171 For Glissant Haiti remains a historical event of central importance. He argued that following its isolation, the possibility for Caribbean solidarity dried up, the struggle for freedom turned into a struggle for citizenship, which in turn took the form of assimilation and departmentalisation (CD 7).

172 On the role of theatre as forming an essential element of nation-building see the chapter *Théâtre, conscience du peuple* in *Le discours antillais. “En son commencement, il n'est pas de nation sans théâtre”* (In the beginning, there is no nation without theatre) (LDA 396).

fundamental awareness of the disavowed African heritage of the majority of the Antillean population.

In general terms, the importance of being aware of history is usually expressed in the phrase “The past is never dead. It's not even past”, attributed to William Faulkner. Glissant's fictional oeuvre includes several passages that emphasise the relevance of this idea. In *Le quatrième siècle*, for example, the young Mathieu is at first hesitant to accord the past any importance in the present. It is only when he descends from the hill on which Papa Longoué's house is based, that he remarks that the land is owned by a certain Larroche, who turns out to be a descendant of the slave owner Laroche to which Longoué's historical account was dedicated. By showing how current power dynamics have a longer history that one needs to know in order to not accept them as natural or inevitable, and in order to reject the social categories invented by the coloniser, the *quimboiseur* Longoué thus proves to Mathieu that, “*tu ne peux pas, je te dis, tu ne peux rien si tu ne remontes pas la source*”¹⁷³ (LQS 191). Put more clearly, one cannot develop a political strategy to change the status quo if one does not have an awareness of the genealogy of forces that have led to the current inequalities. Towards the end of the book, Mathieu has learned his lesson when he asks: “*Le passé. Qu'est le passé sinon la connaissance qui te roidit dans la terre et te pousse en foule dans demain?*”¹⁷⁴ (LQS 280). In this formulation, Mathieu seems to reiterate what I have referred to as Glissant's prophetic vision of the past, namely as a particular kind of historic knowledge that needs to be shared with a collective and brought into play for a future-orientated political project. Elsewhere in the novel, possessing but a vague understanding of history is equated to a physically disabled body when Mathieu says: “*La misère vient avec, mais c'est d'abord la moitié de cerveau, le bras coupé, la jambe qui nous manque depuis si longtemps*”¹⁷⁵ (LQS 268). The metaphor of physical disability directly refers to the brutal modes of punishment inflicted on maroons and re-emphasises the need to know one's history to reach a sense of socio-cultural balance and wholeness that would otherwise remain forever elusive, perpetually haunting any political vision for the future. The overpowering influence of colonial historiography on Martinicans is also expressed in *La case du commandeur*, where Cherubin, who has fled a mental institution together with Mycéa tells her Mycéa that one can either climb into history or be crushed by it: “You have to climb up onto time like a brave rider if you don't want time to mount you like a zebu” (LCDC 204).

In other words, believing in the myth of history as the narrative of unstoppable Western progress, might lead to the perpetuation of an ongoing state of exploitation and subservience to the

173 “You cannot, I tell you, you cannot do anything if you do not return to the source”, my translation.

174 “The Past. What is the past if not the knowledge that ties you to the ground, pushing you towards tomorrow with the masses?”, my translation

175 “It is not the misery, it is that half of our brain is missing, the cut off arm, the leg, that has been missing for so long”, my translation.

goals of others. In addition to this 'functional necessity' of knowing the past, the blocked or erased memory of the 'land before', referring to the African continent, is the central point of reference for the narratives running across several of Glissant's novels and operates as the curse haunting the Antilles. In the novel *La case du commandeur*, the name Odon, whose name alludes to the phrase "I don't know", haunts the novel's protagonists. Similar to the curse Glissant identified to be haunting the South in the work of Faulkner, this inability to know the past is thus more generally identified as the root cause of the cultural imbalance endured by Martinicans in Glissant's fiction.

The Poet's Prophecy – 'The World Is Creolising Itself'

As outlined above, Glissant's engagement with the past is marked by an intimate relationship with the future. Although Glissant did not evoke a 'futuristic' or 'sci-fi' vision of the world,¹⁷⁶ the notion of creolisation is prophetic the sense of Glissant's expression '*le monde se creolise*' (the world is creolising). While this statement, in a first instance, evokes Glissant's belief that the encounters of the cultures of the world is going to increasingly produce the kind of cultural *métissages* that have marked the Caribbean, it is also based on the belief that this future is already the present in many places in the world. This view can be linked to significance of 'the wind' and 'common places' (*lieux communs*) in Glissant's fictional oeuvre, as well as the notion of a 'memory of the future' as expressed in his essay *Mémoires des esclavages* (2007)

The wind is a reoccurring symbol in Glissant's fictional work, especially throughout *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod*. While its precise meaning remains vague, it appears to symbolise the force of history as a constant force operating across time and space, one that links different parts of the world together. Its force cannot be measured or resisted, a characteristic in line with Glissant's conception of creolisation, as something that has a determining force over world historic events (1.4.1.). Just like the wind that pushes the sand of the Sahara up until Panama, so the force of creolisation pushes across the Atlantic, and from South to North America, establishing Relation:

“Le vent le vent le vent –, Ne l'avez-vous pas surpris quand il amarre ses cordes en fouets de cyclone à l'affût du ventre sombre de l'Atlantique ou quand il tourbillonne en élégance au bord de ce grand bond qui commence et finit dans le Sudeste de Brésil [...] ou quand il pousse droit depuis les sables d'Afrique jusqu'à Panama où il se coule dans le Canal sans avoir à présenter de feuilles de frêt ni acquitter les péages” (OD 157).¹⁷⁷

At times, the wind also takes on the connotation as the 'wind of change' in Glissant's work. For example, when the first ancestor of the Béluse family takes part in a slave revolt the wind starts blowing in the valley and once they opt to return to the plantation it breaks down (LQS 102), or

¹⁷⁶An exception is the dystopian vision of Martinique as a future museum for the case of a 'successful colonisation' discussed in 3.2.

¹⁷⁷“The wind the wind the wind –, don't let it catch you by surprise when it whips its ropes of cyclones looking over the dark belly of the Atlantic or when it elegantly swirls along the coast of this great surge that begins in the Southeast of Brazil [...] or when it pushes the sands of Africa all the way up until Panama where it flows into the Channel without declaring its cargo or paying a toll”, my translation.

when Mathieu speaks of a 'lack of wind' when referring to a lack of revolutionary action on the island (LQS 121). Like oral history, the wind is also characterised by a quintessential elusiveness. When Mathieu realises that he 'does not know anything at all', opening up to the lessons of Papa Longoué, he eventually feels the wind (LQS 123). “*Parce que le passé n'est pas dans ce que tu connais par certitude, il est aussi dans tout ce qui passe comme le vent et que personne n'arrête dans ses mains fermées*”¹⁷⁸ (LQS 146).

The shift from a singular History to the emergence of pluralistic histories, which Glissant dates to the end of the Second World War, brings with it the emergence of new '*lieux communs*' (common places) that lead to a blurring of histories that exclusively belong to particular people or geographies which he also refers to as transversal histories (ME 34). In the essay *Mémoires des esclavages* (2007), which forms part of a project to create museum for the memory of slavery in France to which I will return in the ensuing section (2.3.2.), Glissant introduced between collective memory and personal memory implies an evolution from 'tribal memory' to what he calls 'a collective cultural memory of the Earth' (*mémoire culturelle de la collectivité Terre*): “*que chaque collectivité ou nation détermine pour sa part mais partage d'emblée avec toutes les autres*”¹⁷⁹ (ME 23). In analogy to personal memory that can be automatic, conscious or unconscious, the table also presents that collective memories can be accepted or integrated, refused or repressed. In *Mémoires des esclavages*, this problematic of different kinds of memorialisation is directly linked to different conceptions of nation-states as either adhering to single root identities (ME 36) or pluralistic identities that are open towards creolisation. He wrote in this regard:

*“L'enjeu de toute émancipation est en effet d'abord la liberté du mélange, du métissage, de la créolisation, que le raciste et l'esclavagiste repoussent avec un inlassable acharnement. Vaincre l'esclavage, c'est aussi comprendre cette nature et cette fonction des créolisations, et comprendre que l'univers des esclavagistes est celui de la solitude enragée de soi”*¹⁸⁰ (ME 42-43).

Each regained memory can thus potentially serve as a 'common-place' to foster solidarities between people (ME 124), which for Glissant also presents a singular opportunity to convince racists of their folly. His conception of history and memory thus puts particular emphasis on the necessity of revealing historic relations, based on the belief that by making these connections visible, racist fixations on purity and singularity can be effectively countered.¹⁸¹ Moving from the memory of the tribe to a conscious engagement with the manifold histories of the world, thus

178“Because the past is not in what you know with certainty, it is also in all that passes with the wind and that no one can keep in his closed hands [...] the past is not like a palm tree straight and smooth, no, it starts with the first root and goes up, never ending, into the sky”, my translation.

179“that each collectivity or nation determines for itself but which it immediately shares will all others”, my translation.

180“*At stake with any emancipation is at first the freedom to mix, to merge, of creolisation, which the racist and the slaves relentlessly push away. To win over slavery also means to understand the nature and function of these creolisations and to understand that the universe of the slavers is that of a solitude angry with itself*”, my translation.

181 A substantial body of work concerned with the role of history and memory in the Caribbean as well as in postcolonial settings more generally can be brought in conversation with Glissant in this regard.

implies that any institutionalisation of memory would have to be created by the descendants of slaves and the descendants of slave masters (ME 139-42). As much as the *mémoires de la tribu* are attached to a mythologised past for Glissant, the *mémoire de la collectivité Terre* is tied to another seemingly paradoxical notion: the “*mémoire du futur*”. Glissant writes about this 'future memory':

“La *mémoire de la collectivité Terre* rassemble tout ce qui rapproche les membres d'une collectivité ou d'une nation dans leur commun rapport à l'autre, considéré à son tour non pas comme communauté ou nation, mais comme élément de la globalité Terre. Cette mémoire est tout entière tournée vers l'avenir, elle oublie volontiers le passé et elle *crain*t généralement l'événement futur”¹⁸² (ME 165).

To further explicate this element he refers to ecological concerns which combine both of these elements: the fear an apocalyptic disaster and the hope for global solutions (ME 165). In short: “The collective memory of the Earth is future-oriented, from us, from our present” (*La mémoire de la collectivité Terre est prospective, à partir de nous, de notre présent*) (ME 165). It is in this sense that I suggest to read Glissant's reference to Fanon's statement: “I am not a slave of slavery”.¹⁸³ Knowledge is for Glissant intimately related to an encounter with another, not merely the self or one's own community. Writing about Fanon that he did not want to 'blindly camp in front of the suffering of the masses of slaves', even if they were his ancestors, he argues that “*Il veut aussi regarder ailleurs, vers d'autres peuples qui souffrent, vers d'autres pensées qui partagent. Et je suggérerais plus tard que, si l'esclave pouvait ne pas savoir (mais il essayait à toute force de déchirer ce voile devant ses yeux) l'esclave de l'esclavage est celui qui ne veut pas savoir*”¹⁸⁴ (ME 172). This will to know about the suffering of others and share one's own history with them also means that slavery is not relegated to the past but also brings with it a commitment to find out about how slavery persists today in different forms, to which Glissant's museum project was explicitly devoted (ME 84).

As a noteworthy overlap, the sense of time inherent in Glissant's notion of a prophetic vision of the past can be connected with debates around the concept of 'African time'. As Souleymane Bachir Diagne argues against the anthropologic writings of John Mbiti who argued that in most African societies time is composed of events, which leads to the past being the most important dimension of the time (2016, 38), and the view that: “time is a two-dimensional phenomenon with a long *past*, a *present* and virtually *no future*” (Mbiti quoted in Diagne 2016, 38-39). Referring to the figure of the prophet, who is of particular interest throughout the remainder of this chapter, Diagne

182 “The *collective memory of the Earth* collects everything that bring the members of a collectivity or a nation together in their relations with another, who are themselves not considered as a community or nation, but as an element of the globality of the Earth. This memory is altogether turned towards the future, it voluntarily forgets the past because it is *generally concerned with the event of the future*”, my translation.

183 This statement is also briefly discussed in *Le discours antillais* (LDA 129).

184 “He also wants to see beyond, towards other people who suffer, towards other thoughts that share. And I will suggest later on that, if the slave could not know (but he tried by all means to tear away the veil in front of his eyes) the slave of slaver is the one who *does not want to know*”, my translation.

points out that in the absence of a future, “the prophet finds himself invested in the impossible mission of *telling* a future that he can see but which, literally, does not *speak* to his people” (39). Instead of remaining at the limit of this impossibility and at the notion that a future vision has to be introduced from outside (Western) cultures, Diagne suggests that “What the prophets want, when they grow impatient and exasperated, irritated and exhausted, is action, in the present, in accordance with what the future demands. Or better: action with the aim of bringing such a future into being” (47). Citing Gaston Berger he writes “the future is no longer what inevitably must be produced, it is not even what will happen; it is what the world as a whole will make” (47). This transition from 'seeing' to 'action', characterises the 'prospective attitude and disposition towards anticipation' of the prophet in African societies for Diagne. As I will further outline below (2.3.), Diagne's vision of the prophet is in line with Glissant's own practice of history-telling when he writes: “we must therefore create the time we need” (47).

2.2.3. The Multiple Meanings of Marronage in *Le discours antillais*

This sub-section outlines the history and meanings of marronage emerging when Glissant's *Le discours antillais* is read in conjunction with the discussion of his philosophy of history, as it appears in his fictional work. Without there being a neat separation between the two, this sub-section thus moves from a consideration of Glissant's philosophy of history on abstract terms, and marronage as a historic phenomenon, to an interrogation of its potential application in the realm of abstract political arguments. By showing how Glissant shifted from an engagement with marronage as a historical phenomenon to an application of marronage as a metaphor to describe the intellectual practices of his time, the permeable boundaries between the past, present and future as well as the mutual relevance of historic research and the formulation of abstract political concepts become apparent.

As Neil Roberts notes, most references to marronage have been left out of the English translation of *Le discours antillais* (2015, 216). This is a particularly stark omission, since *Le discours antillais* contains what is Glissant's most elaborate theoretical discussion of marronage in Martinique and the Caribbean. The main thrust of *Le discours antillais* is geared towards the 'total transformation of social and mental structures' in the Caribbean, but specifically in the French Antilles (CD 174). It is a call to restore both, a natural balance between man and nature (CD 192), and a natural solidarity between the islands across the linguistic and official divisions left by the colonising powers. Noticing that the dream of Caribbean unity was 'still absurd on a political level', Glissant put his hope on the collaboration between Caribbean intellectuals who kept the dream “alive in a limited way in the cultural sphere” (CD 222-23). What had to be done, in Glissant's

view, was to pass on the dream of Caribbean unity from intellectuals to 'the people', who did not 'feel it in a vital way' in Glissant's view. In this context, the solidarity fostered among intellectuals of different Caribbean islands could also be framed as a form of collective marronage invested in taking on sociogenic characteristics. This perception of intellectual marronage as a community-building intellectual practice, which I am attributing to Glissant's politics of relation, differs from his own depiction of intellectual marronage in *Le discours antillais*, to which I will now turn.

Endurance and Violence as Different Forms of Slave Resistance

Writing about the particularities of historic marronage in Martinique, Glissant began by noting that, without an extensive hinterland or mountainous terrain that would have offered maroons with natural zones of refuge, the *béké* supervision system became so tightly knit that the interactions between maroons and slaves were almost completely cut off.¹⁸⁵ In accordance with existing historical scholarship mentioned earlier (2.1.1.), Glissant thus noted that due to its relatively small scale, marronage in Martinique “[*le marronage*] *ne laissa que des traces dans l'inconscient collectif et non pas des influences déterminantes sur la coutume populaire*”¹⁸⁶ (LDA 70). His agreement with the numeric limitations and cultural legacy of marronage in Martinique does, however, not equate with the interpretation upheld by historians, sociologists and anthropologists who have claimed that the dispersed nature of marronage in the French Antilles does not warrant speaking of it as a concerted effort of contestation, relegating it as isolated acts of panic or desperation (LDA 104). Quite to the contrary, Glissant insisted on the *monumental importance* of the maroon figure for the French Antilles, as I emphasised in the afore-cited quote referring to the maroon as the 'only true hero of the Antilles' (LDA 104). For Glissant, Schoelcher's position as a singular hero of the abolition movement, as much as the categories he introduced, signify a '*détournement*' (misappropriation) of the anti-slavery struggle led in the first instance by slaves and maroons (LDA 154). The maroons, who liberate themselves, are in this regard a kind of counter-figure to Schoelcher.

In Chapter 17 of *Le discours antillais*, titled *La résistance*, Glissant presented his own categorisation of marronage¹⁸⁷ which significantly differs from that of Schoelcher and historians consciously or unconsciously borrowing from his epistemology (2.1.2.). For Glissant, *marronage* and the *economy of survival* maintained by slaves on the plantation have to be considered as the two most important modes of resistance to the plantation system: “*La résistance populaire est d'abord 'coutumière': c'est l'organisation d'une économie de survie – et parfois violente: c'est le*

185 “As an island without a cultural hinterland, and no autonomous system of production Martinique is a 'cornered community’” (CD 102-04).

186 “[marronage] only left traces in the collective unconscious and had no determining influence on popular culture”, my translation.

187 The only part included in the English version is a short passage about the differentiation between carnival (music, dance, gesture) and armed marronage as (CD 248).

*marronage*¹⁸⁸ (LDA 67). By equating these two forms of resistance, Glissant emphasised that the political difference between those who stayed on the plantation and those who fled should not be over-emphasised. As much as the decision to flee from the plantation is a demonstration of 'determination' and 'courage' mentioned above, the maintenance of an economy of survival on the plantation is to Glissant characteristic for a “*peuple rusé, connaisseur, à la patience délibérée*”¹⁸⁹ (LDA 67). Establishing his own categories for anti-slavery resistance between 'customary' and 'violent' forms in this manner, Glissant was more interested in the outcomes of different modes of resistance than in their motivation or numeric size. As he remarked about the economy of survival, its outcome was above all marked by an inability to create a sense of community that could grow over the course of several generations. The ability or inability to create communities thus emerges as a strong criteria for political action according to Glissant. Although the maintenance of small 'creole gardens' that plantation owners granted slaves lead to a cultural unity between slaves and maroons, this shared economic practice did not manifest itself in the establishment of a 'class' in a Marxist sense (LDA 68). Instead, it constituted what Glissant called a 'dispersed class' that was essentially hindered from creating and pursuing common interests through a structurally imposed alienation from the technology it used, which were provided by the slave master (LDA 101-02). The kind of survival tactics effectively contradicted the macro-economic paradigm of monoculture and production for export, but its fractured character (small plots of land contained by the plantation) effectively limited its implications (LDA 73). Only if the survival economy would have been envisioned as a more general system, meaning that it would have to be concerned with the creation of a community that consciously understands its survival as a mode of resistance, would this mode of resistance have heeded more profound effects in Glissant's view (LDA 73).

The Maroon and the Quimboiseur as Two Archetypes of Resistance

Breaking down the category of *marronage* further in *Le discours antillais*, Glissant proposed to differentiate among metaphorical manifestations of *marronage*: the first one referring to what he calls 'violent resistance', which I have described above and which Glissant considered to have been an 'absolutely generalised phenomenon' in the Caribbean (LDA 69), and the second as an intellectual *marronage*, which he primarily attributes to the social groups of 'mulattoes' or creoles and plantation workers with primary school education who had no economic power but were absorbed by the official administration and 'caught in the trap of wanting to become citizens' (LDA 70). In contrast to the former, intellectual *marronage* in Martinique did not offer any structural resistance to the plantation system in that it was confined to an elite level or 'superstructure', in

188“Popular resistance is at first customary: it is the organisation of an economy of survival – and at times violent: that's *marronage*”, my translation.

189“a cunning people, knowing, and deliberately patient”, my translation.

which assimilated slaves collaborated with the *béké* class that, on another level, was limited in its political influence since all major decisions were made in Paris (LDA 71). This over-determination from elsewhere (the laws upholding and abolishing slavery both came from France) could have offered the basis for a unity among all social classes since in Glissant's eyes, colonisation in Martinique produced an equality among all social classes as 'clients' of a third party, namely metropolitan France (LDA 72-75). Yet, largely due to the racist logic underlying the plantocracy, this solidarity never manifested. In other words, the kind of *external domination* France exercised in Martinique could have offered a common ground with the power of uniting all Martinicans (*béké*, slaves, maroons, mulattoes) against those who held the actual power and were in the French metropole. But this opportunity to unite against an external power was not ceased.

Returning to the category of 'violent marronage', which in *Le discours antillais* reappears as the most viable mode of resistance, Glissant writes about the foundation of the 'disequilibrium' in Chapter 23, which is part of a more general analysis of the political problems haunting the Antilles. Glissant envisions two directions that ongoing political movements could take in this context: the first one would be modelled around the symbolic figure of the maroon, a suggestion that is in line with my claims earlier concerning Glissant's investment in writing a new founding epic with the maroon hero as a rallying figure. The second option is the figure of the *quimboiseur*, around which a similar nation-building narrative could be woven. According to Glissant, both figures could play a role in what Glissant calls a national project consisting of a 'continuous resistance to the neocolonial status quo'. As I will elaborate in the following section, the argument can be made that Glissant fashioned his own intellectual marronage along both of these figures.

The maroon is thus a 'natural hero' of the Antilles and should regain his or her rightful place in the centre of Martinican culture, without which it would be doomed to collapse into a perpetual imbalance. Glissant wrote in that regard: "*d'une communauté qu'on a depaillé de ses héros 'naturels', populaires, et qui donc, en les reniant sous la pression aliénante de l'action colonialiste, c'est reniée elle-même. Le déséquilibre est inévitable*"¹⁹⁰ (LDA 104). In this passage, Glissant cast the maroon as a sort of missing link, a missing central piece for a national balance to take effect. If the maroon is freed from the dominant image as bandit or outlaw, and turned into a more inclusive figure representing the resistance of all social actors to the colonial system, it would thus offer a productive rallying point for a new national project, a common point of reference: "*Le marronage. Evidé de sa signification originelle (une contestation culturelle), il est vécu par la communauté comme deviance punissable. La communauté se prive ainsi de ce catalyseur qu'est le héros comme*

190 "of a community that has been deprived of its natural popular heroes, and which in this disavowal under the alienating colonising action, disavows itself. The disequilibrium is inevitable", my translation.

*référence commune*¹⁹¹ (LDA 154). The need to consciously create this sense of togetherness is attributed by Glissant to the fact that one can no longer develop in peace, organically, but need to suddenly declare themselves as such – or perish (LDA 316).

The *quimboiseur*, the second figure representing what Glissant called violent marronage, occupied a special place as the 'key ideologue', priest, healer and seer in maroon communities (LDA 105). In Glissant's account, the *quimboiseurs* initially advocated for a return to Africa which led to their standing becoming increasingly associated with negativity once it became clear that a physical return to Africa would be impossible. Since rooting oneself in the new home was not an option either for the enslaved, assimilation to French culture, or what Glissant calls '*Françisation*', became the preferred option for the Martinican people (LDA 106). So while both the maroon and *quimboiseur* figures are depicted as 'failures' of forms of anti-colonial resistance, they still offered the greatest potential to be taken up and reintroduced into a contemporary political project for Glissant. Although Glissant was critical of any project advocating an actual return to Africa, preferring a combination of *retour* and *detour* (see 3.3.2.), his philosophy of relation was heavily influenced by the ambition to re-relate Caribbean and African world-views, in much the same way as his depiction of the *quimboiseur*. As I will claim in the next section, Glissant not only celebrated the seer in his fiction, but also increasingly *modelled himself along the figure of a quimboiseur* in his performance of a wise prophet. As Glissant points out in Chapter 76 of *Le discours antillais*, titled *Afrique, Afrique*, the figure of the *quimboiseur* is directly linked to the voice of the griot, the African story teller. Noting that it is from him that 'we' inherited the 'cunningness and patience' "*cette manière de se poser à coté de ce qui gene et pressure. Cette patience que nous fouillons sans fin. La voix est avec nous. La voix du griot aveugle. Mais parfois nos yeux sont ouvert, et nous ne voyons pas*"¹⁹² (LDA 392). The key insight from reading *Le discours antillais* following my previous elaborations of Glissant's philosophy of history and prophetic vision of the past, as it is contained in his fictional work, is that Glissant not only thought about the transition from historical to intellectual marronage in abstract terms but directly aimed at putting this theory into practice. This means that, by putting the maroon at centre stage, novels *Le quatrième siècle* or the theatre play *Monsieur Toussaint* can be considered as forming part of a larger project of constructing an alternative founding myth for the Caribbean people. Glissant, who abstractly placed the *quimboiseur* as a key rallying figure for such a community-building project effectively becomes the *quimboiseur* in the narrating of the novel in line with a relational mode of historiography. As I will claim at several points in this thesis, this move from a discursive to a non-discursive realm is a key

191 "Marronage. Emptied of its original meaning (a cultural resistance) is lived by the community as a punishable crime. The community thus deprives itself of this catalyst which is the hero as a common point of reference", my translation.

192 "This way of standing right next to the uncomfortable, where pressure emanates. This patience we are searching for without end. The voice is with us. The voice of the blind griot. But sometimes our eyes are open, and we do not see", my translation.

characteristic of Glissant's politics of relation.

Section Summary

In the course of this section, I have demonstrated how Glissant proceeded from the creation of a counter-discourse to colonial history, which relegates the past of the colonised to 'non-history', towards the creation of a new discursive foundation for an alternative Caribbean community that Glissant considered his own work to directly contribute. In line with Glissant's notion of a prophetic vision of the past I have framed this practice as a flight into the past to discover new modes in which a future politics could be imagined. The importance of the maroon, and specifically the maroon *quimboiseur*, emerged in this context as a symbolic rallying hero figure around which this new founding myth could be constructed. Transitioning from a historical engagement with marronage to a metaphorical engagement with marronage as a concept for a specific form of decolonial resistance, I have also shown how Glissant's work on marronage can be framed as a kind of intellectual marronage which differs from Glissant's own theorisation of this term. From his discussion of how marronage lives on in the subconscious of Martinicans and has moved from the political into the cultural realm, where intellectuals foster alliances across the official political divisions of Caribbean nations, I supported my claim that Glissant's politics of relation warrants to be read through the lens of an intellectual marronage. The necessity of fostering connections between the 'maroon intellectuals' of the 1970s and 1980s and 'the people', to convince them of the vital necessity of Pan-Caribbean solidarities, can in this regard be equated with historic attempts by maroons and slaves to create lasting communities outside the plantation system, an aspect which Glissant repeatedly stressed as a key criteria to evaluate the relevance of modes of resistance. Against the view upheld by some of Glissant's most fervent critics, that Glissant shied away from decisive political actions like Césaire and Fanon (Condé 1976, 166), my thesis is interested in further interrogating the necessity of transitioning from a textual to a non-textual realm as a key characteristic of Glissant's political practice. Although Glissant at no point framed his own extra-textual work in this manner, the following section will make the case that he could be seen as increasingly performing the role of a *quimboiseur*, modelled on the fictional maroon prophet Papa Longoué.

2.3. Becoming Papa Longoué – Glissant's Performance of a Flight Into the Past

The previous sections have focussed on Glissant's engagement with colonial historiography and the elaboration of his alternative conception of history as well as the central role he accorded the maroon in his 'Caribbean history of Martinique'. Towards the end of the previous sub-section, this enquiry has led me from a study of properly discursive political concerns around the writing and narrating of history, towards an awareness of how Glissant not only formulated a philosophy of history in an abstract manner, but also how it was directly practiced in his fictional oeuvre. In so doing, I began making the case that Glissant could be seen as *performing the historic role of the quimboiseur*, the sage, healer, or wise man, whose historic responsibility it was to embody the historic consciousness of his or her community and to pass on the knowledge of the past to future generations. Appearing in Glissant's fictional realm as the figure of Papa Longoué, Debra Anderson has made the point that the *quimboiseur* in Glissant's work is the archetypal ancestor and, in that regard a character reminiscent of the character Sam Fathers in William Faulkner's work (1995, 98-99). Although Glissant scholars have mainly focussed on the similarities between Glissant and the character of Mathieu, who share several obvious character traits or what Smith and Watson call 'vital-statistics', I argue that, in the course of his life, Glissant increasingly modelled his public appearance along the figure of Papa Longoué, as someone who personifies the 'prophetic vision of the past', or in Dash's description of Longoué, someone who "links the spiritual and physical realms of existence and acts as mediator between the past and the present" (1995, 98).

In making this case, I will, first, take a closer look at the characteristics of Glissant's personal flight into the past *as a writer* whose fictional oeuvre was mainly concerned with an interrogation of history (2.3.1.). As will become apparent, the movement that can be traced between the novels such as *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod* is not only one concerned with rendering *invisibilised* historical actors *visible* (slaves, maroons) and applying a new philosophy of time to a fictional world, it was also essentially concerned with bridging the gap between fiction and non-fiction, between textual and non-textual dimensions. This line of study is thus furthermore dedicated to support and further explain my claim about Glissant's engagement with history as constituting itself a particular kind of fugitivity. The second sub-section (2.3.2.) turns more explicitly to a study of Glissant's 'becoming Papa Longoué', by looking at selected examples of life-writing, public performances and organisational action that support this line of reading.

2.3.1. Historic Flight Across Time and Space – The Past as an Island

The focus of this chapter has so far been on Glissant's abstract engagement with the history of marronage. This sub-section interrogates, in contrast, how Glissant's *practice as a writer* of fiction can itself be deemed as a particular kind of marronage into time. Of interest for this line of study is the set of *literary techniques* Glissant employed to work with history and his prophetic vision of the past in the way outlined throughout the previous sections of this chapter. The novels *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod* will be of particular interest in this context, because their most immediate concern can be identified as an opposition to colonial historical discourse, specifically pertaining to the history of slavery and marronage as outlined in 2.1. In their engagements with marronage both novels are thus, in the first instance, concerned with *finding an approach to re-narrate a forgotten past*. Formulated in terms of a practice of marronage, I thus argue that they both, first and foremost, perform a 'flight into the past' to uncover a history that has been discarded into the 'trash bins of history' in Alvin Thompson's formulation. This flight is not performed for its own sake, or only in order to correct a historical record that is biased towards the perspective of the coloniser. The importance of 'having a history' or 'knowing where one comes from' as precondition for a sense of self-pride and cultural balance following the onslaught of colonialism, remained a relevant issue, but increasingly became supplemented by other aspects as the times changed from the era of decolonisation in the early 1960s, when *Le quatrième siècle* was written, and the neoliberal hegemony defining the early 21st century, when *Ormerod* was published. In the following passages, these additional dimensions of historic relevance will be discussed, firstly, in the ensuing in terms of the energy Glissant invested in rendering invisibilised historic actors visible, and secondly, into the introduction of a new sense of time as a basis for the establishment of a new community.

Making the Invisible Visible – The Poet's Responsibility to Pass on the Past

The problem of envisioning the past is the central theme of *Le quatrième siècle*, whose title already refers to a specific temporality. This sense of time is also reflected in the very structure of the novel, which is ordered along the life-trajectories of four generations of two Martinican families. On the level of the multiple storylines, the problematic of envisioning the past is a dominant theme in the main storyline depicting Mathieu's initiation into the profession of 'seer' by the *quimboiseur* Papa Longoué, which serves to frame the others narratives in the novel. The reader of *Le quatrième siècle* not only *reads about* the troubles of the young Mathieu whose initial adherence to a modern scientific belief and the truth of written documents, only slowly relinquishes over the course of the novel (LQS 41). The book's readership can be assumed to also *experience a similar reluctance* through an identification with the young Mathieu's and his subsequent

conviction in Papa Longoué's method of re-imagining history as a valid replacement for the official historical account. *Le quatrième siècle* does, however, not pretend to neatly replace one historic certainty with another. Instead, Mathieu's visions of the past are repeatedly destabilised. This is, for instance, apparent when Mathieu wonders whether the images he is able to conjure up in his mind are his own, or told to him by Papa Longoué, or by 'the wind'. For the reader, similar questions arise. Conjuring up images based on the narratives of *Le quatrième siècle*, one can never be sure whether they are ones own, produced by Glissant, the fictional characters or by the 'invisible force of history'.¹⁹³ The vocation of envisioning the past is thus *passed on* (relayed), from the author to the narrator(s) of the novel, to the characters – first to Papa Longoué and then to Mathieu Béluse – and in a final instance to the reader. The precarious nature of this transfer is emphasised by the frequent breaks in the narrative that unsettle a clear division between speaking subject and addressee, aided by an interruption of standard grammar that conjure up the oral quality of speech, a stutter or a chant.¹⁹⁴ The narratological concern with who is able to see (focalisation) and who is able to speak (narrative voice), stylistic choices which I will discuss at greater length in the subsequent chapters (3.1., 4.2.), is thus transferred to the reader as well.

The main effect of these literary decisions is geared towards making marronage as a historical phenomenon visible, and to give language to that which would otherwise remain unspeakable. In the absence of elaborate historical accounts produced from the perspective of maroons or the enslaved in Martinique, and the prevalent distortion of historical accounts through a colonial bias as depicted in this chapter (2.1.1.), the life experiences of individuals subjected to the system of slavery would otherwise remain invisible. Glissant's practice of 'making maroons speak', along with the slaves and the colonisers – in situations where they were, additionally, themselves not able to understand one another – thus can be seen as a political activity that is of crucial importance in what Rancière calls the 'distribution of the perceptible' (1.2.2.). In this respect, the maroons enter the stage of history and claim to be a part of a political community of the Caribbean, a community that includes the living and the dead, and a community that still needs to be created. Emerging from Glissant's 'prophetic vision of the past' is thus a portrayal of history from the perspective of all actors, the 'good and the bad', the 'progressive and conservative' forces who fought

193 "et il entendit les paroles, ne sachant même pas si papa Longoué les redisait à son intention ou si c'était le vent, dans tout ce cris des ouvrages d'antan, qui enfin marchandait le prix de la chair" (he heard the words and didn't even know whether Papa Longoué was repeating them for him or whether it was the wind, within all the screams of this work before time, where the price of the flesh was being discussed" (LQS 41).

194 "parce que le pays est à Béluse autant qu'à Longoué nous ne parlons jamais de Béluse il savait Béluse il savait ce qui était arrivé au delà des eaux et ainsi le pays était avec lui partagé entre lui et Longoué jusqu'à ce jour où nous avons regardé toi et moi l'écume à la surface du temps, moi un jeune que tu prends encore pour un enfant et toi un débris un bout d'écorce que je prends toujours pour la science et la connaissance oui malgré les livres que je prends pour celui qui sait et qui dispose" (because the country belongs to Béluse and Longoué, but we never speak of Béluse Béluse knew he knew what happened across the waters and that is way he shared the land with Longoué until the day when you and I see the crease and he the surface of time and I young boy who you think is just a child and you an old piece of bark who I consider to be science and knowledge despite all the books that I keep for the one who knows) (LQS 59-60).

for or against the *métissage* brought about by creolisation, on the basis of their radical equality as human beings. Glissant's literature does not erect new hierarchies against the old (race/class/gender), but instead establishes what Rancière calls a 'literary democracy', where 'all words are equal' and colonial hierarchies between human beings and objectified slaves, the discrimination between 'worthy subjects and unworthy subjects, man and things' are destroyed (1.2.2.). This does not mean that the institution of slavery no longer appears as an abominable crime against humanity, and that certain historical actors benefited more from it than others, or were more guilty of the crimes committed in its name, but that – as the frequent changes of perspective in these two novels demonstrate – all characters are entangled in a complex web of interdependence.

Time as a Spiral and the Search for a Natural Rhythm

Of equal importance as the events and experiences that become visible through Glissant's imaginary flight into the past is the concept of history emerging from these two novels. In line with the arguments presented in 2.2. about Glissant's philosophy of history, envisioning or 'moving into' the past takes a different form in his fictional work than jumping from an 'after' to a 'before', scrolling down a timeline, pressing rewind on a tape, or walking down a neat chronological 'memory lane' from the present into the past. As the overall structure of the two novels indicates, where narratives set in the past and present take turns, intersect, or become indiscernible from one another, a new conception of time is needed to conjure up the past in line with Glissant's 'prophetic vision'. No longer confined to an inaccessible temporality, the past actually turns into another place, a neighbouring island, that can be visited if one knows how to make the journey. In *Le quatrième siècle*, this is illustrated in a striking manner when the first Longoué is said to have 'jumped into a past that stood right next to him': “*il est entré tout d'un coup dans le passé qui était debout à côté de lui; c'est pourquoi je l'appelle le premier*”¹⁹⁵ (LQS 146). The first Béluse, in contrast, deliberately decides to remain on the plantation, even when the opportunity for an escape presents itself. The narrative thus suggests that he chooses the present over the past, preferring to adapt to the conditions he finds on the plantation over a recovery of the mode of living before the slave traders captured him. The novel's constant back and forth movements between these two times, moreover, provides a sense of rhythmic order, an order that is altogether removed from the numeric dividers of the book. This rhythm takes on the form of a spiralling movement, where the distances covered by the leaps in time decrease over the course of the book, up to a point where the past merges with the present in Chapter 12, a moment where the social oppositions between the main characters collapses (4.2.). The main impression this structure evokes is that *the past not only informs but is directly connected to the present*. This common-sensical point, which I mentioned earlier, might

¹⁹⁵“he didn't even bother to get to know the valley, he immediately entered a past that stood right next to him, that's why I call him the first”, my translation.

appear trivial, but is of crucial importance in a context that emerges following a physical experience or discursively produced sense of historic rupture. As mentioned earlier, saying that 'we have a violent history and it informs our present' is a marked difference from accepting the status quo as God given or inevitable.

Underlying the spiralling movements across the different time-spaces of the island, is the *longue durée*, suggested by the book's title. The narratives contained in the novel suggest that the term 'century' is not used in strict numerical terms but in reference to the lifespan of several protagonists, as expressed by the afore-cited phrase "*Ce nègre-là, c'est un siècle!* (this black man is a century!)" (LQS 268). This alternative way of measuring time, which I have elaborated in the previous section, is emphasised by the fact that the main representatives of several generations of maroons and slaves pass on at the same point time in the plot: the first Longoué and Béluse, their sons Apostrophe and Anne, together with their wives Edmée and Stéphanise, and that Papa Longoué, the last descendant of the maroon family line of the Longoué dies in 1945, signalling the beginning of the 'fourth century' that begins with the marriage of Mycéa and Mathieu in 1946.

As discussed above (see section 2.2.1.), the necessity of distancing oneself from official chronologies is central to Glissant's approach to history. *Le quatrième siècle* therefore proposes a new method of counting centuries, one structured around the lifetime of an individual, and not along the arbitrary divisions produced by the decimal system and 'world events' that mark a break between 'before' and 'after' that and, from a Martinican point of view, occurred *somewhere else*. Glissant's decision to fix the 'beginning of time' in *Le quatrième siècle* to the moment of flight of the 'first' maroon is particularly remarkable, especially since, historically speaking, there were slaves and maroons in Martinique well before 1788. Instead of implying a new universal or even regional time scale, it might accordingly make sense to interpret Glissant's way of counting centuries in *Le quatrième siècle* as highly subjective and limited to the lineages of particular families and the different generations to which they belong. Again, the proposition of this method of counting time, is not an end in itself or a performance of artistic eccentricity. Instead, it works with the knowledge that all political communities are based on particular conceptions of time. Glissant is thereby proposing a calendar that roughly begins with the arrival of Columbus. The community addressed by this way of counting time is relatively young, when compared to the Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Chinese or ancient Egyptian calendars. It is, however, not limited to any specific religion or geography, but marked by the experience of slavery (and marronage) as the starting point of a new civilisation that emerged from it. This 'civilisation' is markedly different than traditional understanding of the term, and is marked by its relation, or consciousness, of the world not as something to be conquered but as something to be lived-with, and to be approached in its total

diversity.

Whereas *Le quatrième siècle* suggests a new conception of centuries, the *mésure* or rhythm of the narratives contained in *Ormerod* are a host of short sections comprising but a few pages in which a short scene taking place on one of the three main narrative layers is depicted. The *mésure* of the novel can thus be considered to be the breath of the '*conteur*', the storyteller who is also the *quimboiseur*. In this sense, the length of individual anecdotes or episodes figure as 'rocks' whose stability or certainty, provide the grounds on which the narrative can proceed. At the onset of the novel, an unspecified narrator states in this regard:

*“Ce souffle haletant donne mesure à la cadence du conteur, à la parole qu'il profère d'une fois entre deux respirations, comme entre les battements d'un tambour des Mornes mis en tourmente par la vieille lune, et ainsi d'un souffle à l'autre poussées haut il exhale sa divagation, criant le cri du monde”*¹⁹⁶
(OD 13).

Intimately tied to the oral tradition of storytelling, Glissant suggests the rhythm of the human breath, of the heartbeat, as the foundation for his historical account, implying another degree of humaneness, or naturalness, that Glissant also associated with orality, as opposed to the written discourse. Relating this back to what Benitez Rojo calls the Plantation machine (1.4.3.), it is possible to link this rhythm of story-telling as resisting the dominant sense of time produced by industrialisation. As Theodore Zeldin writes, with the advent of the machines and the planned productivity of every hour “Punctuality and efficiency have often become slave-masters, whipping people to cram more activities and achievements into every day, forcing them to surrender their personal rhythms to fixed, anonymous timetables” (2016, 158). Deliberately moving outside of the rhythm of clock as dictating the work-day on the plantation, and reverting back to the natural rhythm dictated by the heart beat, can once more be casted as a form of metaphorical marronage.

Based on this alternative rhythmic structure, *Ormerod* places particular emphasis on the different ways of frequenting the space of the past. Referring back to the formulation quoted earlier, the imperative addressed to the plural *vous*, in the novel is to “*Sautez de roche en roche, d'île en île, de temps anciens en temps actuels et déjà futures, courez au large et embrassez l'entour*”¹⁹⁷ (OD 13). This call-to-action in *Ormerod* is no longer confined to connecting past and present, and to demonstrate how they are informed by one another, but to establish a method with which this knowledge can be lived. The quotation above reiterates the notion of the past as a separate yet accessible space. This jumping motion is also performed on a structural level in *Ormerod* through the divisions of the main chapters, as well as through the short sections into which the novel is

196 “This panting gives the rhythm to the storyteller's cadence, the speech he utter in between two breaths, as in the beating of the drums on the Mornes haunted by the light of the moon, and thus in between two breaths he exhales history, screaming the cry of the world”, my translation.

197 “Jump from rock to rock, from island to island, from ancient to contemporary times that are already the future, run far and wide and embrace the surroundings”, my translation.

divided. A failure to proceed in a certain direction, or a *cul de sac*, does not lead to an end point or a blockage, but is immediately followed by new movements. This is particularly apparent in Nestor'o's quest to find the traces of Flore Gaillard is depicted as a failure. When Pinto flies him across the island, he is unable to detect any traces from above (OD 59) and after more than 15 days he eventually meets Evora and becomes more interested in Evora's contemporary expression of marronage (3.2.) over an irrevocably 'lost' history (OD 136). Nestor'o has changed direction but he keeps searching. In addition to the traditional historical research performed by Nestor'o, who fails to find any archaeological remains of the maroons of the 18th century, other ways of accessing the past include Orestile's practice of 'dreaming up the past' (OD 221), up to the point where the historical figure of Flore Gaillard 'appears right in front of him' (OD 214). This practice of dreaming up the past, which I have mentioned as an integral part of Glissant historiography (2.2.2.), is on another level, performed by the author of the book as well.

'The Past is Not Even Past' – The Grenada Revolution as a Case of Modern Marronage

As Ormerod suggests, some events that have taken place several years or decades ago can be just as inaccessible through established modes of scholarly research as events that took place several centuries ago. Ormerod makes this case with regards to the revolution in Grenada, whose events remain clouded in mystery for several of the novel's characters, a mystery depicted in Apocal's quest to search for the traces of Maurice Bishop following his disappearance on October 19, 1983 (OD 231). For Glissant's approach to history the difficulty of accessing history, is thus not a question of how long ago these events are relegated 'back in time', but mainly results from specific power configurations that prevent a certain knowledge to circulate, to be recorded and archived. The link between the historical narrative of Flore Gaillard's maroon gang and the Grenada Revolution is established through a variety of different connections. They cross the divisions of fiction and non-fiction, the textual and non-textual realm. As I will elaborate more fully in the ensuing chapter (3.1.3.) these connections are created through a friendship being alluded to between the narrator and Beverly Ormerod, who told him about the events, a biological relationship between Ormerod and her brother who was directly involved in the revolution, the structure of the novel which interweaves two intersecting narratives and the analogies that are evoked between the two historic events. The latter is made apparent when the 'events' in Grenada are introduced in a conversation between Apocal and Nestero'o in the following manner: “*vous vous détachez maintenant des Brigands, voyons comme l'intrigue a fleuri à Grenade*”¹⁹⁸ (OD 139). As much as Flore Gaillard's movement is mentioned as belonging to the 'generalised' nature of marronage in the 18th century, the movement of insurrection in the Caribbean and in Central America in the 20th century is depicted as

198“now detach yourself from the *Brigands*, let's see how the intrigue flourished in Grenada“, my translation.

having reached similar degree (OD 188), thus indicating that the spiralling motion of time has led to two the two events resembling one another, despite being separated by two centuries. In this sense, the two form part of the same tradition of marronage.

In historical terms, the Grenada revolution refers to the People's Revolutionary Government proclaimed in March 1979, after the New Jewel Movement, led by Maurice Bishop, took power. The regime, which was credited with a series of social and cultural innovations was increasingly isolated due to its Marxist-Leninist orientations and eventually overthrown by an invasion of the United States in October 1983 (Lamming 2004, 181-95). The terms with which Bishop is described by Apocal in *Ormerod*, as a young man with socialist-marxist ideas who is loved by his people, appearing measured and modest, despite his extreme ideas (OD 139),¹⁹⁹ effectively re-inscribes him in the pantheon of leaders of Third World countries who attempted to change the terms of engagement with Western powers for the betterment of their people and eventually paid with their lives for their convictions. Figures like Patrice Lumumba, Che Guevara and Thomas Sankara form part of this pantheon of martyrs. In the aftermath of the assassination of Bishop, who was betrayed and killed by one of his own comrade (another parallel to the story of Flore Gaillard, 4.2.1.), the news about the events in Grenada does not reach beyond the confines of the island. Grenada is thus said to be enclosed thrice, once because of the islands' 'remoteness' from the geopolitical centres of power, twice because of the Caribbean islands' disconnection from one another, and finally due to the systematic silencing of the subaltern in global media discourse. As the narrator laments: “*la Tragédie obscure des îles noyées de soleil c'est la maladie inguérissable de ceux dont personne au monde ne parle ni ne se soucie*”²⁰⁰ (OD 140). And later: “*nous ne nous fréquentions pas d'une île à l'autre, nous n'y pensions pas, comment aurions-nous pu par quelques vagues ou sensationnelles déclarations des journaux entre dans la connaissance de cela qui restait inconnue des acteurs eux-mêmes*”²⁰¹ (OD 141), or “*L'Archipel est noué de noeuds où aucun courant ne circule*”²⁰² (OD 187). Instead of creating their own networks of communication, news from the neighbouring islands only reach Martinique through hearsay or is filtered through powerful media networks like CNN (OD 187). In line with the notion of the past as an island, this sense of isolation and confinement to an island is both meant in a literal and a metaphorical sense of hesitating to approach what happened in the past. As a way of showing the alternative flows of information that persist in this context, in

199 This rendition is in line with George Lamming's evaluation of the Grenada revolution: “Grenada was both a heroic and tragic suicidal experience. During its brief period of four years, the Bishop administration provided an example of genuine commitment to change, and had made much progress in creating institutions which would ensure effective people's participation in self-management, or so it seemed. It was the [an] experiment [...] which had captured the imagination of the countries youth” (2004, 13).

200 “the obscure tragedy of the islands flooded in sunlight is the incurable disease of those who no one cares to speak about and no one worries”, my translation.

201 “we don't move from one island to another, we don't even think about it, how could we find out from several several sensationalist newspaper announcements what the actors did not know themselves”, my translation.

202 “The archipelago is connected by nodes where no electricity circulates”, my translation.

Ormerod the centre of information on the Grenada revolution turns out to be a barber shop in Saint George owned by a character called Mister Eleazo, a partisan of Bishop (OD 206).

Taking on the same responsibility as Mister Eleazo, as an alternative, subjective archive and disseminator of historical knowledge, Glissant used his fiction to render invisible events and actors of the past visible, to give them a voice and include them as part of a Caribbean history to be shared. The problem of communicating with the past has, in this sub-section, become equated with a spatial problem of communicating across or frequenting other islands, an issue to which I will turn more extensively in the following chapter. What has become apparent in this sub-section is how Glissant's political practice permeated all levels of his fictional work: from the books main themes to their structuring principles, and the roles ascribed to individual characters. Not stopping at the borders of the book, an aspect to which I have already alluded by referring to the relationship between author and reader produced by his fiction, the ensuing sub-section will outline how this 'wholistic effort' transcended the realm of writing and informed Glissant's physical performance as *quimboiseur* and his extra-textual engagement for the establishment of institutions to lend his philosophy of history a more permanent quality.

2.3.2. Performing the Prophet of Creolisation – The Public Appearance of the Late Glissant

The fictional figure of Papa Longoué features most prominently in Glissant's first two novels, *La Lézarde* (1958) and *Le quatrième siècle* (1964). He descends from a long line of maroons who live on the hills of Martinique and whose genealogy *Le quatrième siècle* depicts over several generations (see also 4.2.). When he dies he passes on the responsibility as the spiritual guide and historical archive of the island onto the young Mathieu and his wife Mycéa. Especially in *La Lézarde*, Papa Longoué symbolises the 'old', the ancient herbal healing powers and prophesy carried over to the Caribbean from Africa, the mythical 'land before'. When he passes away and a young generation moves out into the world after the official end of colonisation, the narrator remarks that he was 'never more alive' (LL 213), alluding both to the strong influence his predictions had on Mathieu and Mycéa, and on their intention of creating a future society based on his teachings (LL 214). As I have mentioned before, Glissant's fictional project was primarily dedicated to (re)writing the history of Martinique – as is particularly apparent in *Le quatrième siècle*, *La case du commandeur* (1981), *Mahagony* (1987) and *Ormerod* (2003) – and thus, in a sense, carried on the legacy of the fictional *quimboiseur* in the non-fictional realm of writing books about history. But, as I outlined throughout the introduction to this thesis (1.1.), Glissant's political practice was deeply marked by the permeability of the border between writing and action. In line with Diagne's arguments about the role of the prophet in African societies (2.2.2.), the 'prospective

attitude and disposition towards anticipation' of the *quimboiseur* is less geared to 'seeing into the future' but to bringing the future into being through action. François Noudelmann has remarked this trait of Glissant's self-perception in the context of his increased visibility as a public intellectual in the Francophone cultural scene of the early 2000s in the following terms:

“He dreams of reaching contemporary society and to escape from a specialised academic audience, because he has not renounced the idea that what is at stake with even the most ethereal and complicated poetry, is in the end always the issue of knowledge and of action, because deciphering the world already forms part of working towards its transformation”²⁰³ (2018, 382).

Studying the more embodied form the political dimension of Glissant's philosophy of history took throughout this sub-section, my attention will fall on two aspects: The first places a focus on Glissant's appearance and self-stylisation as a 'prophet of creolisation' along the figure of Papa Longoué at the onset of the 21st century. For this aspect I will turn both to Noudelmann's life-writing account, as well as Glissant's participation in the documentary by Manthia Diawara *One World in Relation* (2009). The idea here is not to refer to these public appearances as being of equal importance as his more expansive body of written work, but as being of specific importance in the context of a philosophy that does not believe in the dichotomy between writing and life, body and mind, theory and practice. A second line of interest is going to be the concrete organisational work Glissant pursued in the same time around the project of a museum for slavery in France and the establishment of a national holiday for the commemoration of slavery. In terms of the elements of his political archive, I will therefore turn to an investigation of the interwoven nature of life-writing and organisational action, while repeatedly pointing out the presence of his abstract political thought within these modes of practice.

Glissant's Self-Stylisation in Manthia Diawara's One World in Relation

Although Glissant's work and persona featured in French mainstream media from early on in his career, and particularly after the Renaudot Prize (1.3.1.), he was not invested in taking on the role of a public intellectual who provides commentary on a wide range of socio-political issues. Following the decreasing interest in his oeuvre in France and the difficulty of being acknowledged as a national Martinican poet alongside his long time 'rival' Aimé Césaire, Glissant became increasingly isolated in the French cultural scene of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In a chapter titled *Le prophète de la créolisation (1994-1998)*, François Noudelmann refers to his appointment as professor for French Studies at the City University New York in 1994 in this sense as a 'definite exile': “Martinique did not grant him the prestige that he felt it owed him, France did not offer him a perspective, and it was in the US, whose imperialist politics he denounced and whose consumerism

²⁰³“Il rêve d'atteindre la société actuelle et de sortir de la spécialisation universitaire car il n'a pas renoncé à l'idée que la poésie la plus éthérée, la plus compliquée, est toujours une affaire de connaissance et finalement d'action car déchiffrer le monde oeuvre déjà à sa transformation”, my translation.

he didn't appreciate where he had to exercise his magisterium²⁰⁴ (2018, 316).

The prophet of creolisation, to take up Noudelmann's term, was at this point almost devoid of a community on which he could impart his vision. In this context, Glissant relocated the centre of his activities back to Paris during the semester breaks. In the late 1990s, following a friendship with the French politician Dominique de Villepin, to which I will return below, Glissant appeared more frequently in the French public. In the lead up to his project of creating an *Institut du Tout-Monde* in Paris, Noudelmann observes that he took every opportunity to share his ideas with a larger French audience: "He accepts all invitations, artistic, political, memorial, literary ... glad to speak, to feel his speech touch and disturb his audience"²⁰⁵ (2018, 361). In a heated social context, in which anti-racist movements like the *Indigènes de la République* emerged on the French political scene to combat structural anti-black discrimination by the French state, Glissant appeared like a moderate voice that was more compatible with expectations of mainstream French media. In Noudelmann's account, the response Glissant received was an 'unconditional sympathy':

"An unconditional sympathy greets him in the seminar rooms and auditoriums, a respect mixed with tenderness towards this old man, coming from another century from a far away land, delivering a message of love, at the basis, even if he does not use the term, insisting on the beauty of relation and on the benefits of the encounter of differences"²⁰⁶ (361).

In the process of becoming increasingly visible and audible, on television, in newspaper articles and on radio, Glissant in Noudelmann's view increasingly took on the tone of an 'intellectual guide', a 'new Marco Polo' or a preacher (2018, 362, 366). Without intending to ridiculing these public performances as unbecoming a serious poet and philosopher, as certain formulations of Noudelmann imply, from my perspective, the decision to share his vision of the world and history with a larger audience is congruent with the role of the *quimboiseur*. Apart from the relatively small community of literary disciples, students and readers he had created around himself in the course of his life, the media visibility accorded to him at this late point in time allowed him to spread 'the message' as widely as possible. His performances were also not limited to France. His work also became increasingly popular in the US, and he attended a growing amount of conferences, as well as global art events like the *Documenta 11* in Kassel in 2002, and the *Venice biennale* in 2003 (382).

The image of the prophet of creolisation evoked by Noudelmann risks appearing like an

204 "La Martinique ne lui a pas accordé la place qu'il pensait légitime, la France ne lui offre aucune perspective et, finalement, c'est aux Etats-Unis, dont il a dénoncé la politique impérialiste et dont il goute peu le consumérisme, qu'il exerce son magistère", my translation.

205 "Il accepte toutes les invitations, artistiques, politique, mémorielles, littéraires ... heureux de parler, de sentir que sa parole touche et trouble les auditeurs", my translation.

206 "Une sympathie inconditionnelle l'accueille dans les salles et les auditoriums, sans contradicteurs, un respect mêlé de tendresse à l'égard de cet homme âgé, venu d'un autre siècle et d'une terre éloignée, délivrant un message d'amour, au fond, même s'il n'emploie pas ce terme, insistant sur la beauté de la relation et sur les bienfaits de la rencontre des différences", my translation.

exaggeration or even an attempt to ridicule what Noudelmann alludes to as Glissant's narcissist tendency. To counter-balance this psychological interpretation, I would like to refer to Diawara's film *One World in Relation* (2009), which I consider to be among the most important and perhaps the most *visible* part of the collective life-writing practice belonging to Glissant's political archive. In the documentary, which was produced as part of the *Documenta 14*, Glissant is depicted in similar ways than the ones described in Noudelmann's book. At the point in time in which the documentary was filmed, Glissant was no longer allowed to make the Transatlantic journey by plane due to health reasons. Instead he repeatedly took the journey on the cruise ship *Queen Mary II* where a part of the documentary was filmed. Despite voicing his reservations about such an iconographic project, Glissant consented to participating in *expressing* or *staging* the main thrust of his philosophy of relation in front of Diawara's camera.

In scenographic terms, *One World in Relation* mainly shows Glissant as a singular figure. The film shows him reading from his books, speaking directly to the camera or shown on the cruise ship as well as on walks in Martinique. These depictions are intersected by camera shots that show the surrounding landscape, the ocean, the beach or Martinican tropical forest. In one of the first scenes of the film, Glissant is visiting the *Anse Caffard Cap 110* monument – a sculptural installation in honour of slaves who drowned in 1830 off the coast of Le Diamant, where Glissant lived at the time. Glissant is shown sitting on the remains of a dried up tree trunk, facing the sea, while the story of the sunken ship that clandestinely carried slaves is narrated by him (Illustration 2). In another camera shot, Jazz musician and scholar Jacques Coursil is playing the trumpet next to the same memorial. The imagery conjured up here is deliberately multilayered.



Illustration 2: Glissant in front of the Anse Caffard Cap 110 monument in Le Diamant, caption from the film *One World in Relation* by Manthia Diawara (2009).

Glissant's presence at this site is not only representative of his sustained engagement with history, and particularly his commitment to re-narrating and keeping alive the history of slavery. As he says in the documentary, no one really knows anything about the ship that sunk here two centuries ago. The monument therefore also marks the impossibility to recover the details of this moment in time. What is left, and this is what the sculptures of Laurent Valère in the background of the scene do, is to mark the ongoing presence of this past through artistic means, thus a similar line of work Glissant pursued in his writing. In his novel *Ormerod*, Glissant also creates an immediate link between the tragedy that took place at Anse Caffard with the tradition of marronage, by speculating that the ship was deliberately made to drown by rebellious Igbo slaves who, in their preference of death over servitude, could be considered as being among the islands 'first maroons' (OD 125). In addition to these 'relations' Glissant's gaze over the Atlantic ocean also alludes to his vocation of seeing the 'land before', Africa, which in his fictional work is the privileged ability of the *quimboiseur* Papa Longoué and his successors. On yet another level, the featuring of Coursil's music alludes to the tradition of jazz as a powerful metaphor for the culture that emerged out of the catastrophe of the slave trade. At a later point, this dimension of interpretation is directly alluded to in the film when Glissant refers to 'jazz as a method of memory that is valuable for everyone in the Tout-Monde'. In the documentary, this method of remembering is thus performed in multiple ways. Enumerating these associations in this manner points out some of the complex layers to which *One World in Relation* alludes to those familiar with Glissant's work. On a more general level, what the film is getting across to a larger audience is a highly condensed version of Glissant's philosophy. In this respect Glissant reiterates all of his main 'slogans' or mantras in the course of the film and their respective explanations: 'I believe in the right to opacity', 'I can change in an exchange with another without losing myself' and 'I believe in the future of small countries' among others.

For a general audience, the iconography that is created by the film is that of an old philosopher who passes on his message to the next generation. Accentuated by the walking stick and the hat, that at this point of his life had already become somewhat iconic symbols among Glissant's followers, he appears as the embodiment of an old wise man, a prophet who has seen into the past, has lived a full life and is imparting his wisdom as to which actions need to be put into place in the present to shape the future. What matters to me here is less who, in the final instance, decided or authorised this *mise-en-scene* than the fact that the project was quite apparently of a collaborative nature between two long-time friends. As Noudelmann speculates, Glissant hoped that through Diawara his work could reach a larger audience, particularly the Afro-American intellectuals that had ignored his work up until that point (2018, 379). What is remarkable about the circulation of the film is that it has for the most part been reserved for audiences visiting museum

exhibitions.²⁰⁷ Instead of circulating widely, Glissant's message has, so far, been reserved for a relatively elitist contemporary art audience. Judging from Glissant's own growing involvement in the art scene, this focus might be attributed to this audience being particularly apt at cultivating a 'relational' sensitivity that would make it inclined to sympathise with his imaginary. Translated into the practice of a modern *quimboiseur*, this means that the community Glissant was addressing with this project was certainly no longer the closed community sitting around the mythical camp fire, but a particular brand of cosmopolitan community that is, both, closely entangled with the machinations of global capitalism through the art industry, as well as tending to be highly critical of it. In chapter 4 I will take up this thread in my study of the world-communities Glissant created throughout his life, a practice that can be connected to his role as 'prophet' and self-assigned creator of new founding myths. The ensuing sub-section connects this discussion to another form Glissant's extra-textual engagement with history. This aspect of his political practice was less based on performative embodiments of his ideas but on the translation or transferral of his philosophy into institutions and monuments designed to outlast his own life.

Institutionalising the Memory of the Future – Glissant's Mémoires des esclavages and the Centre national pour la mémoire des esclavages

In 2003, Glissant met the French politician Dominique de Villepin in New York. De Villepin, who was supposed to take over the presidency from Jacques Chirac, had just announced that France would oppose the US war in Iraq. According to Noudelmann, their shared interest in poetry is what let them see beyond their ideological differences, resulting in a friendship that evolved once Glissant rented out an apartment close to Villepin in the diplomatic district around the Boulevard des Invalides in Paris in 2005 (2018, 269). In the same year, Chirac had inaugurated the ethnographic *Musée du Quai Branly*, which Glissant interpreted as a sign of a growing openness towards non-European cultures among the French liberal elite in Noudelmann's account. With the support of Villepin, Chirac commissioned Glissant to set up a project proposal or 'prefiguration' to found an institutional space that would acknowledge the responsibility of the French state in the slave trade (354). In 2001, Chirac had already passed the law that acknowledged the slave trade as a crime against humanity and had institutionalised May 10 as a commemorative day for the abolition of slavery.²⁰⁸ In what would turn out to be his closest collaboration with the French state, Glissant began working on a document that should form the basis for the manner in which the history of slavery should be included in the curricula of French institutions of learning.

²⁰⁷My comments about the film are based on notes taken during a screening at the exhibition *Das Kapital. Schuld - Territorium - Utopie*, by the German national gallery at Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, July 2 – November 6, 2016 (Berlin), and a screening as part of the exhibition *Mondialité*, at the Villa Boghossian April 19 – September 10, 2017 (Brussels).

²⁰⁸The day is also known as the Taubira Law, due to the decisive impact by Christiane Taubira on passing this legislation. Taubira was a close friend and prominent advocate of the works of Glissant.

According to Noudelmann, the reporting on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) founded in 1996, had a significant impact on Glissant's conceptualisation of the project through its privileging of the values of forgiveness over sentiments of revenge (356). In the context of a French national memorialisation of slavery, reconciliation meant for Glissant that the memory of slavery does not only belong to any set community, such as the descendants of slaves, but would have to be shared by all communities concerned. Glissant's critique of single-root identities based on biological genealogy calls for the memory of the slave trade to be shared across the separations of 'roots, origins and ancestors' (356). The main aim of this project for him was thus to bridge these identitarian borders by overcoming a single-roots imaginary towards a “*mise en relation de toutes les mémoires croisés*” (putting in relation of all the memories that cross each other) (357).

The official document Glissant produced in response to Chirac's commission was later published as the essay *Mémoires des esclavages* (2007), with a foreword by de Villepin. The study includes both an elaboration of Glissant philosophy of history as well as a discussion of the practical aspects to consider as part of institutionalising the *Centre national*. This book forms part of a broader publishing initiative around the anniversary of the official abolition of slavery in France and its colonies in 1848. The manifesto *Tous les jours de Mai* (2008), the brochure *10 mai: Mémoires de la traite négrière, de l'esclavage et de leurs abolitions* (2010), a series of newspaper articles as well as a conference organised at the *Quai Branly* museum, that was planned to be organised annually (Noudelmann 2018, 360), form part of this body of work. Due to the elaborate manner in which his project was formulated in *Mémoires des esclavages*, I will in the following engage with this particular text more elaborately.

As the plural form of slaveries in the title indicates, the *Centre national* Glissant was commissioned to imagine would have to be dedicated to all forms of slavery, past and present, Transatlantic, Transsaharian and in the region of the Indian Ocean. As outlined above (2.2.2.), the importance of cultivating a historic imaginary is of crucial political importance for Glissant. In the *Mémoires des esclavages* he equated the inability to remember on an individual and collective level to a kind of an illness that remains invisible until it breaks out, such as “*comme la maladie du diabète, dont nous autres Antillais ne nous méfions jamais assez, elles grossissent et détruisent sans se faire reconnaître, en douce*”²⁰⁹ (ME 129). For a while, choosing to forget or claiming to not have a history worth remembering, might work for a society, this quote implies. But, in the long run, this practice will end up leading towards the kind of socio-cultural imbalances described by Glissant and Fanon. The *Centre national* Glissant envisioned in the *Mémoires des esclavages* could effectively

²⁰⁹“like diabetes of which we are never scared enough in the Antillean, they spread and destroy without letting themselves known, softly“, my translation.

work against this kind of racism. Beginning from the assumption that 'one learns how to remember but one does not learn to remember otherwise', he wrote:

*“on n'arrive pas à convaincre un raciste, sinon à l'occasion de moments violents et répétés qui lui feront revivre d'anciens traumatismes. La seule exception à cette sorte de règle est peut-être qu'un enseignement bien conduit des relations historiques peut parfois neutraliser les fixations conscients ou les embarras inconscients”*²¹⁰ (ME 162-63).

The main thrust in the *Mémoires des esclavages* is, in this sense, geared towards bringing about the kind of reconciliation between the victims and beneficiaries mentioned earlier. Proceeding from the problem statement that the relation between the communities concerned by the history of slavery are at an impasse: *“les victimes craignent la lumière, les profiteurs disposent de tous les leurres imaginables”* (the victims are afraid of the light, the beneficiaries possess all tricks imaginable) (ME 24), Glissant made the case that the only way out of this blocked situation is the celebration of *“la liberté du mélange, du métissage, de la creolisation, que le raciste et l'esclavagiste repoussent avec un inlassable acharnement”*²¹¹ (ME 43). In this vein, and this can be seen as the main proposal made by *Mémoires des esclavages*, Glissant formulates two 'proposals' from the perspective of the descendants of slaves and slave-holders (ME 138). Writing in the names of 'those who have suffered through slavery', he relinquishes the claim to reparations by arguing that the only kind of reparation would have to be paid to Africa for the 'total underdevelopment' in which the colonial project has led the continent (ME 139). In turn responding to the account of the 'victims', he wrote in the name of the 'descendants of those who upheld slavery' by relinquishing the claim to a superiority based on power, arguing that the greatness of a country depends on its opening to a new planetary route, which he calls 'the route of the solidarities of the world' (ME 142).

In passing, Glissant connects these thoughts on how to arrive at this relational imaginary of history with considerations about the 'national' character of the *Centre*. Emphasising the unifying dynamic of a 'nation', Glissant insisted that a nation is not a 'patchwork' of different forms of communitarianisms (ME 130), but should be seen as integrating *'toutes les particularités qui la composent’* (all composing particularities) (ME 131). This open-ended process would, also be reflected in the notion of citizenship resulting out of this national consciousness in his view: *“chaque jour conquise un peut plus avant, des appart de tous à cette nation commune [...] C'est pourquoi il se développe une vie politique, dont les données évoluent sans cesse”*²¹² (ME 131).

The general characteristics of Glissant's thought on political communities and his democracy

210 “you cannot convince a racist, only at repeatedly violent moments that will make him relive ancient traumata. The only exception to this kind of rule is perhaps that a well-thought out teaching of historical relations can at times neutralise conscious fixations or unconscious embarrassments”, my translation.

211 “The freedom to mix, of *métissage*, of creolisation, which the racist and the slaver reject with unwavering fury”, my translation.

212 “achieved every day a little more, the belongings of everyone to this shared nation [...] that's how a political life develops, whose composing factors are endlessly evolving”, my translation.

will be more elaborately discussed in chapters 4 and 5 (4.1.2., 5.3., 5.4.). Of greater interest, in this context, is to note how Glissant used a project endorsed by the French state to re-articulate or re-frame the kind of utopian nation-hood he envisioned for France. Despite the important symbolic significance of institutionalising the memorialisation of the slave trade in the Parisian landscape, Glissant's proposal for the *Centre national* can be criticised from several different angles.

Above all, Glissant positioning as a singular author who speaks in the name of all parties concerned is startling, especially against the background of Glissant's general aversion to claims of representation in his fictional work. Furthermore, there is no actual process of consultation or deliberation happening as part of or within Glissant's 'prefiguration'. Moreover, as the example of the South African TRC has forcefully shown, the continuities in power relations between the beneficiaries and victims of past injustices can easily be perpetuated when one party symbolically relinquishes its right to redress and the other its responsibility to pay reparations in the larger sense of the term. Glissant's project thus risked alienating large sections of society that fought against the ongoing racialised discrimination endured by generations of black French citizens and immigrants. Without taking anything away from these valid points of criticism, it is also important to not neglect the pedagogical and symbolic importance such a *Centre national* could have for generations to come. With the electoral victory of Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007, which brought an abrupt halt to projects started in the previous legislation period the *Centre national* was never established. Instead of visibly marking the historical relations produced by slavery and colonialism as proposed by Glissant's *Centre national*, president François Hollande inaugurated the so-called *Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration* in 2014. The *Musée de l'immigration*, which is based in the same building that once housed the *Musée des Colonies* (1931-1935), and the *Musée national des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie* (1990-2003), a name change that effectively functions as a euphemism, avoids any engagement with the problematic imperial history of France and relegates the issue to a neutral social phenomenon.

Launched in 2013 as a website by the *Institut du Tout-Monde*, Glissant's project for the memorialisation of slavery in France moved from a textual realm into the digital realm, where it is still in existence today. Significantly less visible than a materialised national centre would have been, the website www.lesmemoiresdesesclavages.com uses the tools accorded by the digital realm to pass on Glissant's sense of history to younger generations through a deliberate focus on high school pedagogy. As the website states: "The website is conceived as a didactic tool, a place of sensitisation and a lever of reflection about memorial processes attached to the multi-secular phenomena of the slave trades, opening itself also to the consideration of modern forms of

slavery²¹³. The internet provides the project with the possibility to disseminate its knowledge not only within a small community of readers attracted to Glissant's work and thereby to the work done by the *Institut du Tout-Monde*, but with a larger international public. As the website states, its archival and pedagogic mission is made of three main elements: a historical overview of slavery, a pedagogic hand book written by Glissant, and a collection of audiovisual resources. Additionally, students can take an online course. The translation of Glissant's philosophic and organisational work around the *Centre national* is particularly remarkable in the sense that it 'boils down' the complexity of Glissant's thought on history and slavery with the aim of reaching the largest audience possible. Instead of being a one-directional space in which knowledge is being disseminated in a top-down fashion, the website also states that it aims at becoming an interactive space where students can directly produce and share contents. While the scarce resources behind the initiative limit its reach,²¹⁴ the malleability of Glissant's political work to take on different forms in response to changing political contexts and technological developments is important to acknowledge, and constitutes an aspect that warrants to be more comprehensively developed in the ensuing chapters.

Chapter Summary

By dedicating this chapter to Glissant's engagement with history in general and with the history of marronage in particular, I pursued several intersecting interests. My main aim was to present Glissant's engagement with the history of marronage as a point of departure, as well as a specific political strategy that can be considered as forming part of his overall politics of relation. His engagement with history could, in that sense, generally be depicted as a flight into time to discover new modes of resistance in the present.

Looked at more closely, Glissant's interaction with the history of marronage emerged multilayered and multidirectional. Bearing in mind the outstanding significance Glissant accorded to the narratives that bind imaginary communities together, the first section of this chapter showed (2.1.), how a part of Glissant's work was invested in countering a colonial historical discourse that denigrates the importance of marronage as a historical phenomenon and, by doing so, denies its *historical and theoretical political potential* by either downplaying its numerical scale and effects on the plantation system, obscures the *original cause* of its emergence (slavery), renders the *generalised character of marronage as a political movement* invisible by taking it apart and grouping it into several categories according to allegedly 'objective factors' such as numeric size and duration. This became particularly apparent in the way that African political ideas, prevalent

213“*Le site est conçu à la fois comme un outil didactique, un lieu de sensibilisation et un levier de réflexion à propos des processus mémoriels attachés aux phénomènes multiséculaires des traites esclavagistes, s'ouvrant par ailleurs sur une prise en compte de l'esclavage moderne*”, my translation.

214The website receives financial support from the Regional Council Île-de-France and the Maison de l'Amérique latine.

among maroon communities, were cast as backward or premodern instead of inherently revolutionary vis-à-vis the plantation system and its constituting ideologies of racism, capitalism and sexism. As I showed throughout this chapter, and as will become even more apparent in the ensuing study, an important part of what I consider to be Glissant's intellectual practice and abstract engagement with marronage, is committed to juxtaposing this view on the history of marronage with an alternative one consisting of the following aspects: It is a historical narrative that is not only told from the perspective of a single actor (coloniser) and relying on a single historical source (written documents) and a singular conception of history, but instead attempts to produce *a plurality of historical accounts* from the perspectives of all the main social actors involved to set different conceptions of history in relation with one another.²¹⁵ Moreover, its perception of marronage as a historical phenomenon is not limited to an exclusive concern or privileging of a particular type of marronage but instead seeks to perceive it as a whole, a political movement of resistance, that not only comprises small, grand and sovereign cases but also bridges the divides of individual islands or regions (English/French/Spanish spheres of influence). Lastly, it is marked by an interest in exploring the revolutionary potential of maroon thought and communal models as ideas that were developed *inside, in relation with and outside of the plantation*. Whereas the kind of domination upheld by the plantation system was based on a segregational epistemology, Glissant ascribed a relational epistemology to the creole mix of people and political traditions that historically formed maroon communities.

The kind of counter-history Glissant produced around the figure of the maroon was not satisfied with juxtaposing the prevalent colonial narrative with alternative ones. Instead, as I argued in the second part of the chapter (2.2.), it forms part of a larger attempt to re-make history in explicitly political, that is in essentially future- and community-oriented, ways. Only when Glissant's engagement with the history of marronage is placed in the context of his more general philosophy of history, and his conception of new founding myths or world-epics, as outlined at the onset of this chapter, does it become clear that, more than its concern with 'setting the record straight', Glissant was invested in producing a new historical narrative around the figure of the maroon that could serve as a foundation for a Caribbean community *à venir*. The relational method informing his philosophy of history thus appears as more than a toolbox confined to working with the colonial archive and the violent historical erasures it produced. Based on a different epistemology, it simultaneously expresses of a different world view, a different conception of time and a different vision of community between the living and the dead. Glissant's concepts of *prophetic vision of the past* and *founding myth* in this regard served as important links between the

²¹⁵The implications of this perspective for the creation of fictional and non-fictional communities will be discussed at greater length in chapter 4.

political and historical dimensions of his work. They, additionally, substantiated my initial arguments about Glissant's approach to politics being *discursive* in nature.

Glissant's decision to introduce and revalue the maroon into the historical discourse of Martinique and the French Antilles is a radical political act in that it proposes a new hero figure that could serve as a shared object of identification and pride. Positing the maroon as a hero, and not as a bandit or outlaw, not only implies a rejection of the values upheld by the plantation system but also insists on the fact that the struggle against slavery was first and foremost fought from within, through small and large acts of resistance, and only in a second instance was it fought from without by abolitionists like Victor Schoelcher. More importantly for Glissant's political project, placing marronage at the centre of Martinican heritage also implies overcoming a sense of cultural pride that is tied to a cultural proximity with France, which Glissant rejected as an expression of cultural alienation, towards a recognition of 'natural' cultural ties with the people of surrounding Caribbean islands, which share a similar history and geography.

In addition to this discursive dimension of Glissant's historiography, I have pointed out the deliberately non-discursive or extra-textual dimensions of his work in section 2.2. and more strongly in 2.3. Whereas in 2.2. the focus still fell on how Glissant employed fiction and non-fiction to put the vocation of the *quimboiseur* into practice by re-imagining history through fiction, 2.3.3 moved from the domain of writing into the overlapping realms of performance and organisational action. These sections illustrated an important aspect of Glissant's political practice which I introduced earlier (1.2.3., 1.4.2.), namely that Glissant, as many proponents of the black radical tradition, was committed to transcending the boundaries between thought and practice, mind and body, abstract ideas and concrete actions – albeit in more subtle ways than the conventional image of the politically 'committed writer'. By showing how Glissant embodied his ideas in front of a larger audience, adapting the language of his discourse by reducing his philosophy to a set of convenient 'sound-bites', I argued that he was aiming to reach audiences outside than specialised academic scholars who, at that time had already begun to regularly dedicate conferences to his work. Claiming that these public appearances are not incoherent with what I have framed as the 'poet's politics', necessitates both, an awareness of the importance Glissant accorded to the discursive level of politics, as well as an awareness of the role Glissant accorded the *quimboiseur* as a prophet of creolisation, whose role is to serve as a guiding and unifying figure of a new community. Lastly, Glissant's work on the *Centre national* also revealed a properly *institutional* and organisational dimension of his work, that will reappear constantly throughout the remainder of this thesis. By seeking to carve out common ground between his own political project and the French state, Glissant prioritised the symbolic value of an acknowledgement on the part of the French state

for the crimes against humanity committed in its name over the risk of 'tainting his name' by working with the state whose imperial politics he had been criticising throughout his life. While his hope in France as a progressive political actor in the realm of memorialisation can be considered naïve, the transition from the discursive to the non-discursive realm of his political efforts should not be dismissed as futile or ineffective. As I have remarked with regards to the website maintained by the *Institut du Tout-Monde*, the multi-dimensional nature of Glissant's political practice allows it to transform from one realm into another where it can exercise a political influence at a 'lower frequency'.

If the discussion in this chapter was strongly marked by the Caribbean region, the island of Martinique and their relation to France, this was meant to emphasise the longer political tradition of resistance that informed Glissant's work in the concrete and imaginary place from which his work emerged. Several traits from this discussion do, however, extend beyond this geographic specification and can be linked back to Glissant's notion of a world-epic comprised of an infinite number of local histories, to which the decolonial history of the movement of marronage belongs. The ensuing chapter will demonstrate how this global dimension of Glissant's political work can be understood as a flight into the world.

Chapter 3:
From the Plantation to the Tout-Monde
A Marronage into the World

3.0. Chapter Introduction

*“Marronner c'était prendre des chemins de traverse de la pensée.
C'est à dire ne pas accepter les systèmes qu'on nous imposait
ou qu'on voulait nous imposer et essayer de trouver dans le panorama du monde d'autre traces
que les chemins bien damées et bien cordonnées que vous devez nous ne tracer pour nous.
Et pour moi, le marronage, ça était ça, dès le départ, la volonté d'aller vers le monde,
avec les traces que nous allons frayer nous-même”²¹⁶
– Édouard Glissant, *Les hommes livres* (Christiani 1993)*

This chapter further explores the question pertaining to the direction of Glissant's intellectual marronage, which I deem indicative of the main characteristics of his political practice more generally. The main argument I will make in response to this question contends that a movement towards the world, conceptualised as Tout-Monde, defines the central thrust of Glissant's politics of relation. As was the case with the line of flight presented in the previous chapter, this movement can be considered as taking place on several dimensions at once, namely spatial, temporal and epistemological dimensions. In line with the method outlined in 1.4., I will engage with all aspects of Glissant's political archive, that is with his fictional oeuvre, life-writing and performance, abstract political thought as well as initiatives to create concrete organisations or institutions. Particular emphasis is going to be placed on the complex entanglements of the realms of fiction and life-writing of Glissant's archive, an intersection that will be particularly emphasised in section 3.2. The privileging of these two modes is due to the fact that Glissant's abstract arguments for a movement towards the world, which have already been put forward in 1.4.1., in the context of my conceptualisations of creolisation, Tout-Monde and mundiality. Against the background of the considerations entailed in these concepts, the line of study pursued in this chapter is going to provide a more concrete meaning to a politics of relation that takes the world as its main point of reference.

Making the argument that one of the directions that can be detected in Glissant's political archive takes the form of a marronage into the world, at first sight, appears to rehearse the established analysis first promoted by Hallward (2001) and co-signed by Britton (2009) and other Glissant scholars, about a general shift in Glissant's preoccupations from his native island to global political issues (see 1.3.1.). This consensus among Glissant scholars refers to a chronological development implied by the division of an 'early' and 'late Glissant'. My own conceptualisation of

²¹⁶“To maroon meant walking on the hidden byways of thought. It meant to not accept the systems that were imposed on us or that they wanted to impose on us, and to try and find other traces on the panorama of the world than the well groomed and orderly routes that were traced out for us. For me, that's what marronage meant, since the beginning: The will to go towards the world, on paths that we had to find ourselves”, my translation.

Glissant's movement towards the world proceeds from a different perspective. Instead of tracing a chronological development in his work, to detect an evolution (Britton) or degeneration (Hallward) of Glissant's politics, I will argue that the movement of Glissant's work can be perceived as directed towards the world *as a constant vector*. This view is in line with Glissant's own assertion cited in the introduction, that the main object, the main point of reference for his poetic and political work has been the world “in its state of becoming, as it throws us over, as it remains obscure to us, the world we want to enter”, “not the world conceived as the international proletariat, but as a meeting point, the shock between cultures and humanities” (see 1.4.1.). Even if his fictional work and personal initiatives were developed from specific places, the ensuing study thus proposes that *the global point of reference of these political practices, by and large, remained the same*.

Conceptualising a movement towards the world as a form of marronage might be irritating from a perspective that insists on reserving the term for historical usage or for contemporary forms of resistance against political systems, which proponents of Afropessimism have conceptualised as anti-black (Wilderson et al. 2017). The possibility of reading this kind of 'world-movement' as a movement of marronage through a Glissantian lens can, however, not only be supported by the quote by Glissant serving as epigraph to this section, in which he asserted that, for him, marronage implied “The will to go towards the world, on the pathways that we had to open ourselves”. Marronage, in this statement, is not only understood as a physical movement but in a more abstract sense as the departure from mainstream paradigms to explore alternative ways of thought and being that can only be explored if it engages with the radical cultural diversity of the Tout-Monde. Although the maroon's line of flight is thereby translated from a concrete physical and geographic realm to a conceptual and epistemological level, the essential thrust of marronage as a response to an annihilating anti-black violence is not lost since it is still tied to the struggle to carve out an alternative, non-racist, new conception of what it means to be human.

To further support this approach towards the study of Glissant's oeuvre, and to explore its implications for his politics of relation, I begin this chapter by showing how a worldly direction can be discerned in Glissant's novels *Le quatrième siècle* (1964) and *Ormerod* (2003). In both cases I will focus on an array of literary techniques, such as shifts in story settings, movements of characters, focalisation, structure, references and naming practices (3.1.1.). Although a study of the way in which these two books perform the movement towards the world suggests itself in this context because they are thematically directly concerned with marronage, the focus on them is not meant to exclude the possibility of reading other fictional work by Glissant along similar lines. Reading works of the 'early' and 'late' Glissant in relation – as I am doing with *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod* in section 3.1., or with *La Lézarde* (1958), *La case du commandeur* (1981) and *Tout-*

Monde (1993) in section 3.2. – reveals how the movement towards the world can be seen as constitutive for both 'phases'. The charge of an alleged shift away from the local towards the global can thus be directly counter-balanced by a perspective that makes the continuous back-and-forth movements between local and global political levels enacted by Glissant's politics visible. As part of my argument that this worldly direction of Glissant's work can be considered as forming part of an intellectual marronage with both discursive and non-discursive implications, attention will also be placed on how Glissant mixed different genres of political writing and action. As I will show in the ensuing sections, he repeatedly inscribed traces of his activist work into his fiction, along with more abstract considerations appearing most prominently in his essays. As I have begun claiming towards the end of chapter 2, I will once more make that case that it is precisely this mix of genres, of thought and practice, actions and written work, that accords Glissant's politics of relation with one of its most defining qualities, namely the ability to transform and adapt to changing political circumstances.

Chapter Overview

The structure of this chapter reflects both a general line of movement, from the plantation to the Tout-Monde, as well as a transition from fictional to non-fictional practices, a transition that can also be described as shift from less visible to more widely visible modes of politics. In concrete terms, this means that the first section (3.1.) traces how the world emerges as the main point of reference across two of Glissant's fictional texts. In a close reading of *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod*, I identify a subsequent expansion of the sense of the world. Whereas the horizon defining the actions of characters in *Le quatrième siècle* shifts from the plantation to the Caribbean archipelago, *Ormerod* performs a further opening by extending this imaginary geography to the world at large. The second section (3.2.), focusses more distinctly on the transition between the fictional and non-fictional realm by studying the worldly relations of the fictional character Mycéa. By tracing instances where Mycéa 'steps out of the text' and where a non-fictional political initiative is incorporated into the text, this section demonstrates how Glissant worked with the permeability of genre borders to perform an imaginary flight into the world. The third section (3.3.) continues on from the shift made from fictional to non-fictional terrains by interrogating Glissant's personal trajectory, as it has been documented in various acts of life-writing. Repeating the two-fold geographical shift identified in 3.1. – from the plantation to the archipelago, and from the archipelago to the whole-world –, this section also demonstrates how this spatial shift can be read as going hand-in-hand with a shift from fictional and abstract theoretical preoccupations towards the creation of two institutions that were designed by Glissant to lend his philosophic-political project a longer durability and wider reach – thereby in part mirroring the line of study pursued in 2.3.

In terms of a brief outlook into the main findings of this work, this chapter will demonstrate how Glissant's *fictional work on marronage* can be framed as a *performance of marronage in its own right*. A marronage that is spatial, temporal as well as epistemological in nature in that it proposes a different sensibility for the world and an alternative way of connecting local and global political realms that differs from established modes of resistances against neoliberal globalisation. For a better understanding of Glissant's politics of relation, this movement turns out to be crucial in so far as it establishes the vision of the Tout-Monde as central point of reference for political actions, which forms the basis of a way of being in the world one can associate with the notion of black cosmopolitanism. This not only means shifting from a colonial world-view that proposes a singular model of civilisation to an awareness of the multiplicity of civilisations, but also the imperative to reconsider the position of human beings in relation to the non-human or natural world.

3.1. From Fictional Marronage to Fiction as Marronage – Worldly Movements in *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod*

*“tous lieux d'emprisonnements et de libération,
qui sont pour moi aux avant-postes des mers et des océans”²¹⁷*
– Édouard Glissant, *Une nouvelle région du monde* (UNRDM 151)

This section contains a study of *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod* through the lens of a marronage into the world. The general direction of flight that can be discerned from reading these two fictional texts together departs from the confines of the slave plantation and the maroon hideouts of the hills in Martinique, first to the island as a whole and eventually to the surrounding islands of the Caribbean archipelago. From there, it moves further into the whole-world, which itself takes on the shape of an archipelago, a form that, as François Noudelmann points out, served as an abstract model for Glissant's politics of relation: “The Caribbean archipelago provides him the geographic and political paradigm to think about the movement of the world. No island dominates, every island develops its identity in relation with others, through differentiation”²¹⁸ (2018, 296).

Important to note about the worldly direction of Glissant's fiction is that it takes the form of an opening, an open-ended exploration of new landscapes, thus neither in the form of an imperial expansion aiming at conquering new territories, nor as a retreat into isolation or the defence of a de-linked position of sovereignty.²¹⁹ In the two novels that will be the object of study in the ensuing sub-sections, this movement can be discerned on several levels that could, loosely be differentiated

²¹⁷“all places of imprisonment and of liberation are for me foreposts of seas and oceans”, my translation.

²¹⁸“*L'archipel caraïbe lui donne le paradigme géographique et politique pour penser le mouvement du monde. Aucune île ne domine, chacune développe son identité en relation avec les autres, par différenciation*”, my translation.

²¹⁹For an elaboration of this aspect of Glissant's politics of relation see 4.1.2. and 5.1.3.

along two sets of literary techniques, without implying a hierarchy of relevance between the two: (a) changes in the spatial settings of the narratives as they are brought about by the trajectories of fictional characters and the limitations imposed on the sight and knowledge of the narrating voices, and (b) the structure of the novels, references and naming practices – as well as complex combinations of these techniques. In the following, I will single out several examples that I perceive to be most pertinent, in order to illustrate how the spatial and chronological expansion of Glissant's fictional world is performed within and across *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod*. The first two sub-sections trace the movement towards the world performed in the narratives of each of these texts (3.1.1. and 3.1.2.), whereas the third sub-section (3.1.3.) will show how the same movement can also be discerned in the structures and naming-practices in both novels.

3.1.1. New Lands on the Horizon – The Movement From the Plantation to the Archipelago in *Le quatrième siècle*

Le quatrième siècle (1964) was the first novel Glissant published after winning the prestigious Renaudot literary prize for *La Lézarde* in 1958. At the time of writing the novel, Glissant was banned to mainland France by the de Gaulle regime for his role in co-founding the *Front des Antillais et Guyanais pour l'Autonomie* at the height of the decolonial struggle. As mentioned in 2.2., the novel combines philosophical meditations about the role of history and memory in the Caribbean through a depiction of the entanglements of two Martinican families, the Longoué and the Béluse. The Longoué descend from a line of maroons and live on the hills of the island, whereas the Béluse work as slaves on a plantation owned by the *colon* Senglis. The novel anachronistically covers the life trajectories of three generations of these two families, spanning a timeframe from 1788, the moment when the ancestors of the Longoué and Béluse first arrived on a slave ship from Africa, to 1946, the moment when a new generation sets out to leave the island for mainland France.

What is of interest about *Le quatrième siècle* in the context of this chapter is that the movements of its fictional characters are literally and imaginatively confined to the island of Martinique, giving rise to a collective sentiment of suffocating claustrophobia. From the moment when the first ancestor of the Longoué family ('the first Longoué') flees into the hills, the main dynamic of the novel is the separation between the hills and the plantations, the former characterised by liberty and exposure to the forces of nature, the latter by relative material security, and the subjection to the systematic violence and physical exploitation. Although the boundaries between these two zones are not clear-cut, since the enclosure of the plantation is not depicted as complete imprisonment, but as one that leaves its inhabitants the possibility of temporary escapes, the brutality reigning within it is nevertheless in stark contrast to the relative freedom of movement

of the maroons in their hideouts on the hills. As the novel proceeds, the boundaries between the hills and the valley begins to blur as the interactions between several generations of Longoué and Béluse increase in intensity and frequency over several generations.

The sense of being stifled by a confinement to the spatial limits of the island, is first expressed by the character Louise, who was the wife of the plantation owner La Roche, before she helped the first Longoué in his escape. Louise is subsequently abducted by him and brought into forest where the maroons hide, and where she eventually becomes the partner of the first Longoué in their quest to gain control over the hills.²²⁰ When it becomes increasingly clear that the maroon community does not stand a realistic chance of sustaining itself, and that Longoué is wearing himself out in his contest with his double nemesis, the slave Béluse and the planter Laroche, Louise turns to him in an exceptional passage and points to *another possible direction of flight*, one that would take them across the ocean to the surrounding islands that are in such close proximity to Martinique that they can at times be seen on the horizon. The flight across the sea thus represents an inversion of the flight into a hinterland, which as Glissant has pointed out in *Le discours antillais* was not sufficiently vast in Martinique to accommodate a larger population of maroons, as in Jamaica, Haiti or Cuba (CD 102-104) (see also 2.2.). The importance of Louise's 'lesson' to the first Longoué is formally emphasised by italics in the text:

“Elle lui enseigna inutilement son grand projet. Pourquoi toujours fuir vers l'intérieur ? Quand on était debout-au-bout de la Pointe, on pouvait voir parfois une terre à l'horizon. D'après les dires, c'était la même qu'ici: la terre entrait sous la mer et elle reparaisait là-bas, puis elle rentrait encore pour réapparaître plus loin, et ainsi de suite. La jeune femme affirmait. Elle avait entendu les noms des autres terres, elle était sûre d'y arriver. Pourquoi oublier la mer ? [...] La mer est belle, chaude, très douce. Et puis, tout au bout, c'était une terre comme celle-ci, plus grande, entourée de mer; les marrons là-bas se réunissaient, ils avaient des chefs, ils étaient organisés. Les Messieurs parlaient souvent de Sainte-Domingue. Il fallait y arriver! Faire confiance à la mer!” (LQS 92-93).²²¹

Edward Kamau Brathwaite's expression “The unity is sub-marine”, which Glissant took up as the epigraph of *Poétique de la Relation* – and which for him referred as much to the unity of the Caribbean archipelago, as it did to the world at large –, appears here in a singular expression that effectively explodes the geographical confines of the island as a space of isolation or never-ending confrontation with the French colonisers. Louise's affirmation that 'there are other worlds out there',

²²⁰The character of Louise could thus be considered as performing a move that crosses from the side of the coloniser to the maroons, and the border between female and male gender as implied by her adoption of the 'Man' in front of her name. For more on Glissant's attempts at bridging the gender binary in his work of fiction see chapter 6.

²²¹“Unnecessarily she shared her grand plan with him. *Why always flee into the interior? When you stand right at the top of the Peak you could sometimes see land on the horizon. They said it was the same as here: that the land would emerge from under the seas and so on and so forth.* The young woman had confirmed it. She had heard the names of these other countries, she was sure she could reach them. Why not across the sea? [...] The sea is beautiful, warm and smooth. And all the way at the back there was a country like this one, just bigger, surrounded by the sea; that's where the maroons had gathered, they had leaders, they were organised. The Misters spoke about Santo Domingo often. That's how far one would have to go! Trust the sea”, my translation.

also directly refers to Sainte-Domingue at the time of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). Dated as taking place at the same moment in time as the narrative of the first Longoué and Béluse, Louise only knows about the Revolution from what she picked up from the French colonisers on the plantation, but takes from it that the maroons on those islands were united, organised and guided by strong leadership – everything maroons in Martinique did not have and could not realistically aspire to. Lacking concrete knowledge about the political events in Haiti, the glimpse of awareness that such a place exists, a political community in which the institution of slavery was officially abolished, is in stark contrast to the general theme of *Le quatrième siècle*, which continues to depict the dynamics between maroons, slaves and colonisers over the subsequent 150 years before the moment of abolition arrives in 1884. The yearning for, or the awareness of a world beyond the island's horizon disappears altogether in the ensuing chapters and is only taken up again towards the very end of the book by the character of Mathieu Béluse. In 1939 the young Mathieu observes how soldiers from Martinique board the ship to join 'the war' in 1939. Mathieu, who is by now said to embody the spirits of the Longoué and Béluse (LQS 18), longs for the outside world in a manner that is less politically motivated than Louise's. The narrator dismissively presents Mathieu as a general admirer of 'everything that comes from abroad':

*“depuis longtemps déjà la passion était née, s'était fortifiée, de tout ce qui arrivait d'ailleurs, d'au delà l'horizon; et la confiance éblouie en tout ce qui, légitimement ou non, se proclamait l'émanation et la représentation de l'ailleurs. Comme si c'était un morceau miraculeux du monde qui venait chaque fois traverser en météore l'espace close de l'ici [...] c'était déjà le sourd désir de partir, de participer, d'épuiser la diversité irrémédiable – mais qui sans cesse provoque à la réduire en unique vérité – du monde”*²²² (LQS 255).

Although Mathieu's xenophilia and desire to leave the island are described in negative terms as '*sourd*' (dull) (LQS 255) or '*béat*' (blind) (LQS 256), it is already marked by the awareness of the immense diversity of the world, which Glissant later conceptualised as Tout-Monde. However, as with Louise's isolated proposition to escape across the sea, the possibility of *escaping into the world* closes rapidly for Mathieu. A sea blockade imposed by the US and German navy effectively cuts off sea traffic to and from Martinique during the war (LQS 256).²²³ Once the sea blockade is lifted, Mathieu's friend Thaël (*“qui d'un coup avait fondu dans l'éclat du vast monde”*, who had suddenly disappeared into the splendour of the world, LQS 285) is the first to leave for France. Mathieu still remains on the island, unable to live out his literary ambitions abroad. Only once he meets Mycéa,

²²²“for a long time a passion and desire emerged in him about everything that came from elsewhere, from beyond the horizon; and a blind trust in everything that claimed to be a product or representation of this Elsewhere, justly or unjust. As if a wonderful piece of the world came flying and pierced through the hermetically closed space of the Here. [...] there was the dull desire, to leave, to participate, to exploit the unbridgeable diversity of the world – which always tends to get reduced to a singular truth“, my translation.

²²³For Glissant's personal experience of the sea blockade in the 1940s and its importance for his work see Britton's interview with Glissant (2007) and Sylvia Wynter's essay *Beyond the Word of Man* (1989).

who descends from the Celat family, does the world 'open up' again for him: “*Et dans sa certitude, il y avait le monde enfin ouvert, et clair, et peut-être si proche. Les pays qui de partout accouraient et te parlaient avec leurs sables, leurs boues rouges, leurs fleuves à l'infini, la clameur de leurs habitants*”²²⁴ (LQS 286).²²⁵ As if to underline that the type of marronage proposed by *Le quatrième siècle* is not a return to the hills, or a move to another island to re-enact a case of sovereign marronage (Haiti), the novel ends with a feverish vision Mathieu of the underlying unity of the world, which he is able to make out from images of the past, namely in the shape of a 'big transparent ship', from which he is able to hear the noise of the chains:

“*Et dans la calme monotone bienveillance qui montait de la nuit, et loin sur toutes les îles et les champs à ras et le bois résonnant, il voyait entrer le haut bateau transparent qui naviguait dans les terres. Il entendait le bruit des chaînes qu'on manoeuvrait, les oué en cadence, les cannes qui craquaient sous l'hélice, dans le soleil, oui, dans la grand saison chaude – c'est la fièvre c'est un monde le monde et la parole enfonce la voix grossit la voix brûle dans le feu fixe et il tourne dans la tête emportant balayant murissant – et qui n'a fin ho, ni commencement*”²²⁶ (LQS 287).

This feverish vision, stylistically emphasised through the omission of any punctuation in between 'the fever is a world the world and speech', marks the moment of Mathieu's awakening and his maturation as the designated inheritor of Papa Longoué's vocation as the island's *quimboiseur*. On another level of fictional discourse, the character's confinement to the island is also reflected in the main narrative voice of the novel. Throughout the novel the narrating voice and its audience remain indistinctive and appears to stand somewhat outside the world of the characters it depicts. Through a virtuous mix of stylistic means (punctuation, quotation marks, brackets and italics), the role of the narrator first increasingly appears to be taken up by Papa Longoué, and then increasingly by the young Mathieu Béluse. In the sense that their horizons, the limits of their knowledge underlies guide the shorter narratives they envision they both function as focalisers in the novel.²²⁷ The transitions between narrators are so neatly interwoven into the text that the changes between focalisers are difficult to trace, such as in the following example where Mathieu relinquishes to the powers of Papa Longoué and is suddenly able to conjure up a vision of the past, like his teacher:

“*soudain il vit la cabine étroite, à l'odeur forte, qui lui avait d'abord paru une cabane de caisse, où la commodoté avait cédé au travail: les fusils et les pistolets cadencés au mur [...] et il entendit les*

224“And in her certainty the world was finally open and bright, and maybe so close. Countries were coming from everywhere and with them their sand, their red clay, their rivers into eternity, the shouts of their inhabitants“, my translation.

225For Mycéa's relation to Mathieu see 3.2. and 3.3.

226“And in the calm monotone well-meaning that rose from the night and far from all islands, the bare fields and the noise of the forest, he saw the high, transparent ship coming approaching, sailing across the lands. He heard the noise of the chains they were handling, the rhythmic *Oué*, the sugar cane that broke under the screw, under the sun, yes, in the long hot season – it is a fever, it is on world and the world and the word enforce its voice getting stronger the voice burns in the fixed fire and circles in the head and pulls away, sweeps away, makes mature – and has no end ho and no beginning“, my translation.

227The term focalisation was coined by Gérard Genette and refers to a “restriction of narrative information in relation to the experience and knowledge of the narrator, the characters or other, more hypothetical entities in the storyworld”, which can be considered as an elaboration of the notion of 'point of view' or 'perspective' by putting greater emphasis on the “amounts or kinds of information that are accessible under the norms of a particular focalization” (Nierhoff 2013).

*paroles, ne sachant même pas si papa Longoué les redisait à son intention ou si c'était le vent, dans tout ce cri des ouvrages d'antan*²²⁸ (LQS 41).

After this passage, in which an external narrator recounts Mathieu's stream of consciousness, the narrative continues to depict a dialogue envisioned by Mathieu between the colonisers Senglis and La Roche who negotiate the price for newly arrived slaves. Despite the uncertainty that is introduced between the different narrators of the novel, what can be known and seen is, however, limited to the geographic space of Martinique and the timeframe between 1788 and 1946. Crucially, what happened before the first ancestors of the Béluse and Longoué were enslaved in Africa remains a mystery to narrators and characters in the novel alike. As does everything else that happened in what is abstractly referred to as the 'land before' (2.2.2.). This is also expressed on the level of the narrative itself when Papa Longoué and Mathieu argue: “*Mais tu ne sais pas ce qui s'est passé la-bas dans le pays au delà des eaux! Depuis si longtemps, depuis si longtemps, mon fils... “Nous ne savons pas, pensa Mathieu. Nous. Nous!”*²²⁹ (LQS 57).

Likewise, what will happen after 1946, is only vaguely hinted at by the narrator with regards to the inability of the slave owner Senglis to envision a future. The future is only alluded to briefly in the following messianic terms as, “*un monde ignoré, souterrain, encore hésitant mais qui à la fin, par-dessus la nuit de tremblement, après la sourde absence et le sang clandestin, surgirait entre les lames de terre [...] et le rêve rendu possible après le marronage et le combat*²³⁰ (LQS 76, in italics in original). Only towards the very end of the novel does the chronological confinement to the 'four generations' of Béluse and Longoué family members break down, when Mathieu bursts out into a rant about the historical ignorance of Martinican bureaucrats who return from their training in France to administer its *Département*:

*“Il vitupérait les niais [...] qui insinuaient – avec des manières – qu'ils étaient descendants de Caraïbes. Descendants de Caraïbes, tu entends! Parce qu'ils désiraient tout bonnement effacer à jamais le sillon dans la mer. Ces avortons sans honneur n'avaient aucune lumière vraiment sur les Galibis: un peuple d'hommes si fiers que Christophe Colomb, débarquant avec son armement, en juillet 1502, fut frappé de leur audace et de leur dignité [...] Et Mathieu ne remarquait pas qu'à ce moment précis, dans l'emportement de la parole, il avait commencé la chronologie et posé la première borne à partir de laquelle mesurer les siècles”*²³¹ (LQS 268).

228 “he suddenly saw the small cabin and he smelt the strong smell, which he first thought was a small wooden box, work had pushed aside any comfort: guns and pistols were tied against the walls [...] and he heard what was said, unsure whether it was Papa Longoué who repeated the words or whether it was the wind, through all of these cries from a time before”, my translation.

229 “But you don't know what happened in this country across the waters! For so long, for so long, my son...! 'We don't know, Mathieu thought. We. We!’”, my translation.

230 “an unknown world was emerging, subterranean, ignored and uncertain still, that once, after the night of trembling, after the silent absence and secretly shed blood, would reemerge from between the plates of the earth [...] and that after marronage and fighting the dream would be possible again”, my translation.

231 “He railed against the foolish ones [...] who claimed to be the descendants of the Caribs – acting coyly. Descendants of the Caribs, do you hear! Because they wanted to eliminate the waves of the sea. These undignified monsters had no idea of who the Galibis were: A people of proud men, Christopher Columbus, who landed here in July 1502 with his weapons was impressed by their braveness and dignity [...] Those, the same people, who had chased away the Ygnieris from the land until they were

The gradual expansion of the fictional world in *Le quatrième siècle* through the movements of its characters is, in this passage, paralleled by Mathieu's 'unconscious' discovery of a longer historical timeframe, one that takes the presence of the Indigenous peoples who lived in the Caribbean region before the arrival of Europeans into account. For Mathieu's project of preserving the collective history of the Caribbean, this larger temporality can be equated to the opening up of an alternative worldview that can be put to political use. In sum, although *Le quatrième siècle* is most overtly concerned with the history of marronage in Martinique, it traces several lines of flight from the confines of the slave plantation to the world, from historical ignorance to the ability to 'see into the past' by reconciling the legacies of resistance of both slaves and maroons. The form this flight could take does, however, remain but a diffuse aspiration for the main characters in the novel.

Whereas the existence of other islands on the horizon, and the diversity of the world are only hinted at in *Le quatrième siècle*, *Ormerod* becomes more concrete about this line of flight, both in its storylines and in the ways they are narrated. In my presentation of this aspect in the following sub-section, I will focus on the characters and their trajectories in *Ormerod*, before turning to an investigation of the structure of the novel, the use of references to historical figures and fictional naming practices in 3.1.3.

3.1.2. The Sea is Not a Boundary – The Movement From the Archipelago to the World in *Ormerod*

Ormerod was published almost four decades after *Le quatrième siècle*, in 2003. At this point in his career, the early popularity of Glissant's work in France had largely waned due to what was perceived as his works' increasing 'impenetrability' and 'repetitiveness', a trend I have mentioned before (1.3.). In a similar fashion as *Le quatrième siècle*, *Ormerod* weaves together different narrative strands, that are dated as belonging to two different time periods, a contemporary narrative set at the turn of the 21st century and another set in the late 18th century. The former revolves around Nestor'o Sourdefontaine, a Martinican employee of the *Sécurité Social*, with character traits resembling those of Mathieu Béluse, and thus partly Glissant himself, who undertakes a research trip to Martinique's neighbouring island Saint Lucia, in an attempt to trace the forgotten history of a group of maroons led by Flore Gaillard, the female leader of a maroon guerrilla movement against the colonial British regime. Nestor'o's narrative takes up several of the themes discussed in *Le quatrième siècle* concerned with engaging a history whose traces have been erased. Nestor'o's futile attempts to find out more about Flore Gaillard are eventually overshadowed by his encounter with Evora, whose family descends from a line of maroons and lives on a remote hill in Saint Lucia.

exterminated, every single one of them, and were replaced by hundreds of ship loads [...] And Mathieu did not realise that, just in this moment, in the tumult of the words, the chronology began and a new boundary stone was laid, from which he could measure the centuries", my translation.

Nestor'o and Evora fall in love and get married shortly before Evora dies in a plane crash.

The driving force of the various stories brought together in *Ormerod* is Nestor'o's journey from Martinique to Saint-Lucia during his quest to trace the history of Flore Gaillard. In the context of this chapter, the relevance of travelling from Martinique to its neighbouring island, as a movement implying the temporary migration from one state (France) to another (Saint-Lucia), with different official languages (French and English), is heightened by the elaborate depiction of immigration protocol at the airport in Saint-Lucia, which is presented as ridiculous in the face of the proximity of the two islands and their cultural and geographic similarities (OD 59-60). Apart from Nestor'o's research trip, which effectively crosses the border imposed by the horizon seen from Martinique mentioned by Louise in *Le quatrième siècle*, the diverse make-up of Flore Gaillard's maroon gang two centuries earlier, the *Brigands de Bois* serve as an image of inter-Caribbean connections that extends significantly beyond the political horizon drawn by *Le quatrième siècle*. Comprised of maroons and deserted soldiers from Saint-Lucia, Guadeloupe, Cuba and France (OD 21), it, for example, remains subject to speculation in the novel which language the fictional *Brigands de Bois* spoke to one another: Creole, English, French, Spanish or a mixture between all of these (OD 95).

The movement from the island towards the world, which *Ormerod* primarily performs through the physical trajectory of its characters, is further heightened – up to the point of exaggeration – in the movements of the character Alvares, whose trajectory is depicted in a condensed way over the course of several pages. This textual concentration adds to the impression that Alvares' displacements constitute a demonstration of a particularly erratic movement towards the world. Alvares has French-Cuban origins and joins Gaillard after he said to have killed most planters in Guadeloupe on a mission to bring the islands back to France from British control (OD 21). Following the dissolution of the *Brigands*, Alvares moves on to join the French army in Guadeloupe, before he is sent to fight for the French army in a war against Russia (OD 257). Creating his own military sub-group in the war, Alvares adopts a zigzagging fighting technique that is attributed to Flore Gaillard, a strategy that proves to be highly effective in a war that he does not engage in for any apparent political objective.²³² Despite receiving a nomination to join the French royal court following his military victory over the Russian army, Alvares decides to move back to Cuba, where he turns his house into the centre of a conspiracy against the Spanish colonisers (OD 263). Since neither the Cuban population nor the Spanish occupiers are described as being 'ready for independence' (OD 264), Alvares' life is threatened by both sides, forcing him to flee to Venezuela at the time of Simone Bolivar, where he is, at last, able to carry out the revolution he is

²³²He says to Gros Zinc: “*Les guerres sont inutiles, toutes les guerres*” (The wars are useless, all of them) (OD 262).

said to have always dreamt of (OD 265). When he dies during the invasion of Junta that leads to Bolivar's victory two days later, he is depicted as smiling (OD 266) – an image that alludes to the completion of a trajectory that has taken him half-way across the world and back. Alvares's military exploits appear to mainly perform the function of *creating spatial relations*, or of 'entering the whirlwind of the Tout-Monde'.²³³ In the preface to this study I have associated this practice of map-making in fiction as a particular aspect of Glissant's political practice. Single-handedly, Alvares' movements, in that sense, draw a map by tracing a line that runs *from Cuba to Saint-Lucia to Guadeloupe to France to Russia to Cuba to Venezuela*. Following Gaillard's death or 'dissolution' into nature (see 3.2.), Alvares appears to maintain her legacy by moving from one site of struggle to the next, crossing several ideological boundaries in the process, from maroon wars of resistance (Saint-Lucia), to imperial wars of expansion (France-Russia), to the decolonial struggles in Cuba and Venezuela. The *relational* nature of his continuous movements are part of a general characteristic of Glissant's conception of marronage, as a movement that establishes connections, links, associations and is not aimed at isolation. What is particularly noteworthy in this respect is that the relational aspect of Alvares' will, or his need to keep moving, is framed by a general engagement with historical and contemporary forms of marronage and (in the final instance) an anticolonial agenda, thus lending it a deliberate political dimension, which a nomadic practice of 'being on the move for the sake of being on the move' does not have.

The link between historical forms of marronage and its contemporary expressions in *Ormerod* is moreover created on a structural level, in that the depiction of the Pan-Caribbean make-up of the *Brigands* and the global reach of Alvares's travels in the 18th century alternates with the depiction of interactions between Nestor'o and the family of Evora in the 21st century. Evora's family descends from a line of maroons and lives isolated on a hill in Saint-Lucia. Evora's art work is dedicated to taking pictures of the changing cloud formations in the sky. Her artistic practice is not primarily concerned with representing a universal idea of beauty, instead her main concern is in capturing a particular 'essence', which for her family is the shape of 'our archipelago': “*Qu'est-ce que c'était que cet essentiel? Ce qui révèle..., dirent-ils, la manière et la matière de l'archipel... Et qu'est-ce que c'était que cet archipel..., demanda Nestor, qui soupesait déjà la réponse. Notre archipel, oui..., répondirent-ils*”²³⁴ (OD 104).

Constituting an additional layer of meaning of what this archipelago looks like to the aesthetic one depicted in their artwork (always changing/merging/driftng), the interactions between Nestor'o and Evora and her family are informed by a set of Caribbean 'common places' they fall

²³³In that regard they mirror the movements of the character Thael who joins the French army in the colonial war against the Algeria and Indochina in the novel *Tout-Monde* (TM 335).

²³⁴“What is the essential? That which reveals..., they said, the manner and matter of the archipelago... And what is the archipelago..., asked Nestor who was already assuming the response. Our archipelago, yes..., they responded”, my translation.

back on in their conversations: from shared interest in football or music, to a concern with social issues such as drug addiction and xenophobia that is prevalent on several Caribbean islands (OD 106-07). The cultural connections between Martinique and Saint-Lucia is, for instance, illustrated with particular insistence when Nestor'o reacts in creole by saying '*Nou sé frè*' (we are brothers) (OD 131-32) when Saint-Lucians poke fun at him for being 'French'. He uses the same expression in a conversation with Evora, who easily translates his creole into French: “*Nou sé frè, kon zandoli avè mabouya, minm zépina épi zeb-couress, apeuprè kribò ak fèdilans... Et la jeune femme répétait en riant, “Nous sommes frères, comme anolis et mabouya, les épinards et l'herbe-couresse, les cribos et les fers-de-lance...” Nestero'o se réfugiait en elle, Evora*”²³⁵ (OD 132). The wedding ceremony between Nestor'o and Evora, which concludes the first part of *Ormerod* (161-62) extends this image of Pan-Caribbean unity in that it is presented as a harmonious encounter between the local community, and friends and family who visit from near and far. Shared inter Caribbean affinities and solidarities are, again, not only depicted through the arrival of invitees from across the archipelago but, on a symbolic level, through the playing of songs by Bob Marley as 'religious music' from a radio, and the exchanges of gifts, such as when Gaella gifts Jeremiah a book by Derek Walcott, Saint-Lucia's national poet, a gesture hinting at a shared Caribbean poetic sensibility (OD 162). All of these exchanges are depicted by the narrator as a 'completion' of the archipelago in the following celebratory terms: “*les poèmes et la fleur et les pots d'étain se complètent dans une même offrande, avec les plaumes et les reggaes*”²³⁶ (OD 162).

At the wedding, which in official political terms unites a Martinican and a Saint-Lucian, the opening of this archipelago onto the world at large is transposed into another dimension through a noteworthy change in medium. Whereas the walls of Evora's house were previously filled with pictures of the sky (OD 163), her brother Di-John announces on the occasion of the wedding that he has created a website where the photos will be exhibited. The shift from analog representation of art to its digitalisation, which is only mentioned in passing in the narrative, turns into a significant opening or *mise-en-relation* seen through the lens of Glissant's philosophy, when Di-John mentions that Evora's artwork has already received commentaries from as far away as Japan, Manchuria and Valparaiso, in the form of writings and images: “*Les ciels commiquaient avec les ciels, les limites étaient dépassées*” (The heavens communicate with the skies, the limits were overcome) (OD 163).

I have already pointed out the 'malleability' of Glissant's political practice with regards to how the project of the *Centre national pour la mémoire des esclavages* moved into the digital realm

235“*Nou sé frè, kon zandoli avè mabouya, minm zépina épi zeb-couress, apeuprè kribò ak fèdilans...* And the young woman repeated laughingly, 'We are brothers, like anolis and mabouya, like the spinach and couresse herb, like the cribò and the fer-de-lance.... Nestor'o found refuge in her, Evora”, my translation.

236“the poems and the flower and the tinpots complete one another in the same offering, with the plaumes and reggaes”, my translation

of a website maintained by an institution he founded, the *Institut du Tout-Monde* in 2.3. In *Ormerod*, a similar technique is described with regards to a fictional work of art that affects and connects a global audience through the technological means of the internet. The union between Nestor'o and Evora is short-lived, with Evora dying in a plane crash only several hours after their wedding (OD 278), which provokes the narrating voice to speculate about the implications of this literary decision, when the question is posed whether 'this means that the time has not yet come' for a marriage between a Saint-Lucian and a Martinican?²³⁷ Pointing out the impossibility of this symbolic inter-Caribbean union in the form of Evora's death does not have to be read as a pessimistic end-point or cul-de-sac into which Glissant fictional rendition of a contemporary marronage leads. Rather, Evora's death could be said to *mark a boundary that remains to be crossed* in the non-fictional world.²³⁸ Since the boundary is fictional, and is crossed frequently by a host of characters in *Ormerod*, the novel implies that there is no reason to shy away from creating non-fictional relations across this boundary too.

Whereas this sub-section further pursued the geographical line of flight that I began tracing in *Le quatrième siècle* through a reading of *Ormerod*, the following sub-section will look more closely at a set of literary techniques Glissant employed in both novels to establish the world as a point of reference for this fictional oeuvre.

3.1.3. The World as Point of Reference – Creating Worldly Relations Through Literary Techniques

In *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod*, the general movement of fleeing from the confines of the segregational space of the plantation into the whirlwind that constitutes the Tout-Monde is also performed on a structural level as well as through overt and hidden references and naming practices. As Celia Britton has pointed out about the “interconnectedness of literary form and socio-political issues in Glissant's fiction” (2014, 126), these layers of discourse warrant as much attention as the general storylines and the movements of characters outlined in the previous sub-section. Closer attention to these less prominent literary techniques reveals, above all, the multilayered nature and the depth at which Glissant inscribed this expansion of a worldly imaginary into his fictional worlds.

As a case in point, *Le quatrième siècle* is made up of four main parts that denote different geographic settings on Martinique. The first part is named *La pointe des sables* after an outpost of Fort-de-France where the slave ship arrived that brought the first ancestors of the Longoué and

²³⁷A question that turns into a helpless rambling about there actually being 'at least three' happy Martinican-Saint-Lucian couples' which the narrating voice knows (OD 280). For an engagement with the implications of the literary technique which unsettles the functions of author and narrator, see 4.2.2.

²³⁸It can, in that regard, be considered as mirroring the murder of Valérie by the dogs protecting the house of Thaël in Glissant's first novel *La Lézarde* (1958).

Béluse families. The second part is named *Roche Carrée*, after the name of the plantation of La Roche, a plantation owner. The third part is called *Carême à la Touffaille*, after the *La Touffaille* plantation where the Targin family lives. The fourth part is called *Croix-Mission*, after an area of the town of Fort-de-France. I read this structure as reflecting the social divisions of Martinique as they represent the different parts of its landscape (plantation/hills/the town/beach) as well as implying a historical evolution that moves the novels' main historical actors from the beach, to the plantation, to a maroon settlement and the city. In the process of this historical movement, the social barriers between the different isolated zones are crossed through increasing interactions between slaves, maroons and colonisers. This is in part performed structurally in that the individual chapters and subchapters do not adhere to the spatial division implied by the book's main parts. Instead, the novel's times and places change regularly, from present to past and back into the present, shifting from a focus on opposing social actors without any apparent ordering principle. The novel's constant back and forth movement is what provides a sense of rhythm for the reader of *Le quatrième siècle*, a sense of order that is hidden underneath the numeric dividers of the book's main parts, chapters and sub-chapters. The leaps in time decrease over the course of the book, up to a point where the past merges with the present, and the social opposition between the social actors collapse (see 2.3.1.).

The geographic progression across the social boundaries of the island is, moreover, paralleled by a shift from biological inheritance to the triumph of spiritual filiation which Mathieu Béluse's acceptance of Papa Longoué's legacy symbolizes at the end of the novel. The movement out of the confinement of the plantation, but also from the maroon hills into the world, is thus structurally equated to an epistemological shift that no longer holds on to solidarities based on biological relations (as in family relations), and begins to explore new solidarities based on spiritual relations (friendship/love). This conceptual shift, from biological descentance to spiritual inheritance is of key importance to perceive the political implications of Glissant notion of rhizomatic identity (1.4.1.).

The back-and-forth movement performed structurally by *Le quatrième siècle* is further amplified in *Ormerod*. The novel is structured in three main parts, referring to a hill on Saint Lucia (*Le Piton Flore*), a set of great hills across the Caribbean (*Les Gros Mornes*), and one of the characters appearing in the novel (*Orestile*). This division could be interpreted as denoting a shift from a specific geographic hill named after a historical personality, Flore Gaillard in this case, towards a fictional archipelagic construct, the *Gros Mornes*. The *Gros Mornes* are related to the physical and historical entity of the Caribbean archipelago only by abstraction and by extending the symbolic power of a singular maroon hill to an archipelago of hills that can, by definition, not be

confined to a particular geography. The character Orestile moreover refers, both, to a non-fictional figure which the narrative voice claims to have frequented, and the Greek mythological figure Oreste, thus bridging at the same time the divisions between fact and fiction, between the three Caribbean and the Mediterranean seas, and between three different time periods with which the novel is concerned.

Despite the structural tripartition of the novel, its main ordering principle lies in the many sections running across these meta divisions, comprising but a few pages and depicting relatively short scenes. As the opening lines of the novel suggest, the *mésure* or rhythm of the novel's multiple narratives is based on the breath of the '*conteur*' (the storyteller). The length of individual anecdotes or episodes that figure as 'rocks' whose relative stability or certainty within a sea of uncertainty and unpredictability provide the grounds on which the narratives proceed. Whereas the movement of characters in *Le quatrième siècle* was still confined to the crossing of social boundaries on the island, the movements of characters in *Ormerod* is shaped by a hopping from 'island to island', or from 'rock to rock', which is also mirrored by the structure of the novel itself. The lightness which this jumping motion necessitates from both characters and readers, evokes the sense that any failure of proceeding in a certain direction, does not have to lead to a cul de sac or a blockage, but can be immediately followed by new movements. As I pointed out earlier (2.3.1.), this type of movement also pertains to Glissant's approach to history more generally. As much as it is practiced in the search for the traces of maroons by the 'researchers' Glissant portrays in *Ormerod* (Nestor'o, Apocal, Orestile), it could also be seen as being modelled on the flight of maroons, whose movements could not proceed in straight lines either, and could only rely on temporary spaces of rest or refuge. This overlap between the flight into the past and the flight into the world, further emphasises how the divisions between time and space repeatedly collapse in Glissant's fictional work.

The movement towards the world in these fictional texts is also performed on what is perhaps one of the smallest units of literary analysis, that is on the level of the names attributed to the characters of the novels. Names play a key role in creating relations on a symbolic level for Glissant. In both *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod*, this naming practice evolves in a way that expands the geography of the plantation to the world, and from biological to spiritual relations. In *Le quatrième siècle* the difference between being free to carry a name and to name one's own children is mentioned as a central difference between maroons and slaves. Whereas the Béluse are forced to carry the names of French royalty by their masters (Anne, Saint-Yves, etc.), the Longoué choose the names of their children through a creative mix of political significance (Liberté, Melchior) and hearsay (Apostrophe) (LQS 210). The importance of naming in the Caribbean historical context is thus intimately entangled with the issue of identity and/or of being considered

fully human. Before the 'first Longoué' earns his name, he is merely referred to as “*Cet homme qui n'avait plus de souche, ayant roulé dans l'unique vague déferlante du voyage [...] et qui n'était pas encore Longoué*”²³⁹ (LQS 83). In the sense that the author of a work of fiction has the liberty to invent names for the story's characters, one could thus interpret that the writer performs the kind of freedom won by the maroons.

Whereas the naming practice in *Le quatrième siècle* is primarily concerned with the differences between maroons and slaves, *Ormerod* takes the political implications of naming to another level. As I have mentioned in passing in 2.3.1., the title of the novel, *Ormerod*, can in itself be regarded as creating relations in at least three different spatial directions and fictional/non-fictional dimensions. In the novel, the name first appears as belonging to Beverly Ormerod a 'poet friend' Nestor'o speaks to Evora about. Nestor'o tells her that Ormerod is teaching at an Australian university and is writing about Caribbean literature and that she was a contemporary of the events 'they were interested in'. Ormerod is thereby alluded to being an academic and a friend of Glissant, the author existing in the 'real world'. Although the nature of 'the events they were interested in' first remains vague (OD 137-39), it turns out that the husband of Ormerod's sister's was one of the conspirators leading the Grenada rebellion (OD 140), and that he ended up in prison and forgotten. As Apocal tells Nestor'o, 'Ormerod stands for this episode', as they are said to walk past the same places where the maroon leader Flore Gaillard once walked (OD 141). In this brief passage, the name Ormerod therefore creates a relation spanning the fictional and factual realms and the geographies of Martinique (Nestor'o/Apocal), Australia and Grenada. It also, by the narrator's assertion that they walked on the same place where Gaillard walked on, creates a historical relationship with events two centuries earlier. On another level, the title Ormerod bears close resemblance with Derek Walcott's epic poem, *Ormeros* (1990). With its title, Glissant's novel thus again pays homage to the work of Walcott, – to which the fictional gifting at the wedding ceremony between Evora and Nestor'o mentioned earlier also attests –, thus creating an effectively non-fictional relation between two Caribbean poets. Thirdly, and this relationship will be more thoroughly elaborated in chapter 4, based on the fictional story of the Batouto people and their hidden relations, relations that are, among other aspects, maintained through the 'o's in their names. As Glissant elaborated in *Sartorius* (1999), the narratives in *Ormerod* also contain speculations about the possible Batouto identity of the Ormerod family name itself, by virtue of its two 'o's, but also of the o's carried in the names of several fictional characters, such as Nestor'o, and Evora. A similar *mise-en-relation* through hidden references is also performed in *Ormerod* with regards to the invisible connections between different Caribbean maroon heroes. The relationship between Flore

²³⁹“This man who did not have any roots anymore, because the sea washed him here with a single wave [...] this man was not yet Longoué”, my translation.

Gaillard and other maroon leaders is, for example, established when she is said to have been wounded 13 times 'like Toussaint Louverture' (OD 90), or that her downfall was due to an act of betrayal 'like Tupac Amaru II, who led an uprising against the Spanish in the 18th century, or when she is named in the same breath as other historic female maroon leaders: 'Flore Gaillard in Saint Lucie, Solitude in Guadeloupe, Cécile Fatiman in Saint Dominique': "*toutes femmes qui vécutent à des époques différents, encore que dans le même temps, pour la défense de ce quelque chose d'insondable en vérité, souffrance ou liberté, ou volonté indissociable, qu'elles enseignaient aux hommes*"²⁴⁰ (OD 61). Read with the narratological dimension of Glissant's concept of Relation in mind, these brief allusions and hidden reference in the fictional narrative effectively create relations, traveling across spaces and times and forcing the reader to contemplate the continuities and transformations in the struggle for black liberation.

Section Summary

This section demonstrated how Glissant's fictional work traces a movement from the plantation to the world as a spatial movement that mainly operates through a historical dimension by recounting different versions of the Caribbean past. As I have claimed, this movement can be detected both in the trajectories of his fictional characters, but also on a formal level, such as in the structure of his novels and an expansion of the scope of focalisation that sets the framework for the fictional narratives. This 'total' or rather transversal characteristic of his literary political practice, seeks to transcend all levels of fictional visibility, from the title of a book down to a single sign, and has to be considered as a key aspect of Glissant's work. As my reading of *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod* illustrated, Glissant used fiction to model his own conception of marronage in ways that move away from a strictly historical conception as presented in 2.1. Instead, it works with the notion of flight from the plantation in creative and more abstract ways. This flight, moreover, does not stop at the hills where the maroons once found refuge, nor on one of the neighbouring islands, but 'keeps running' until the radical diversity of the world becomes visible. While referring to these literary techniques as a 'fictional marronage' might appear to run the risk of too great an abstraction from 'marronage proper' it is important to emphasise, once more, that these movements are neither erratic, nor nomadic in a highly individualistic sense where being on the move is an end in itself. Instead, Glissant systematically employed the tools of fiction to point out where the crossing of particular borders was necessary for his larger political vision for the Caribbean to be realised. These borders include the spatial and political borders separating different social groups or individual islands, as well as the neat divisions between the past and present, between fact and

²⁴⁰"all these women who lived in different epochs but at the same time, to defend something that remains unfathomable, in suffering or freedom, an indivisible will, which they taught men", my translation.

fiction. The worldly direction of this intellectual marronage has immediate implications for Glissant's political practice. Not only does it challenge the neocolonial divisions among Caribbean islands, many of which are systematically prevented from developing closer political ties due to the interest of their former colonial masters to maintain them as exclusive spheres of influence. It also counters a dominant disciplinary epistemology that upholds the colonial world-view in less overt ways by systematically erasing the past in ways that leaves the Caribbean people no alternative than to turn to their former colonial masters for historical knowledge.

Although this movement to the world is mainly performed on a textual level, this first section has already pointed out how Glissant's writing practice aimed at entering into relations with an extra-textual realm, by, for example, referring to concrete historical events or personalities in his fictional texts, thus blurring the boundary between fiction and non-fiction. This practice can be seen as belonging to the discursive dimension of Glissant's political practice in that it creates an alternative historical account with the aim of replacing the coloniser's bias in official Caribbean historiography with a version of Caribbean history taking *the point of view of all social actors* into account, thus establishing the grounds for what Glissant called a new founding myth (2.0.).

Reading these fictional texts *as marronage*, could thus be framed generally in terms of a spatial and historical movement *into a more pluralistic world(view)*. Referring back to Jacques Rancière's conceptualisation of literary politics, the immediate political impact of this shift could be described by referring to literature's ability and responsibility to render the invisible visible (see 1.2.2.). In this case the invisibilised, or Rancière's *sans-parts*, refer to the historical experience and subjectivity of slaves and maroons as being constitutive for the Caribbean present. In a second instance, the political significance of Glissant's fictional movement towards the world, can be attributed to its ability to *create a new framework of reference* for the political events taking place on individual islands. This frame of reference is not exclusively limited to the island itself or to the centre of the colonising project, but is an archipelagic and a global one. The implications this conceptual shift in the extra-textual realm will become more apparent in the following section.

3.2. Mycéa's Marronage – Disappearing Into the World Without Moving

“I write in you the music of every branch, grave or blue /
With our words we illuminate the water that trembles /
The same beauty makes us cold /
And has unlaced, blade by blade what yesterday /
You bore as cargo on your overflowing river /
Your hand calls back this pack of rumours into something new /
You are astonished to burn more than old incense”
– Édouard Glissant, *For Mycéa* (CP 196 – 97)

Having established the grounds on which the whole-world emerges as the main point of reference in Glissant's fictional oeuvre, this section is interested in insistences where his fictional worlds blend in with a non-fictional realm, and vice versa, in ways that have direct implications for his politics of relation. The structure of this section proceeds from a depiction of the trajectory of the fictional character Mycéa (3.2.1.), to an analysis of an episode where Mycéa steps 'out of the text' and directly confronts the author of the fictional narrative (3.2.2.). The subsequent sub-sections depict an inverse dynamic between the fictional and non-fictional realm by engaging with the presence of one of Glissant's extra-textual initiatives in relation to the character of Mycéa (3.2.3.), an ecological initiative whose 'global' characteristics will be discussed in a final sub-section (3.2.4.).

If Glissant's archipelagic fictional oeuvre can be said to have a centre, it would be the fictional character Mycéa. Whereas she only appears towards the end of *Le quatrième siècle*, she features prominently throughout *La Lézarde* (1958) and *Tout-Monde* (1993). *La case du commandeur* (1981) is, moreover, entirely dedicated to her life story. In line with the permeable boundaries between Glissant's individual publications, her character can thus be seen as performing a relational function by moving from one book to another. Importantly, her character is also not confined to the genre of the novel, but also features in one of his theatre plays,²⁴¹ his essays and, as the introductory quote indicates, in his poetry.

Mycéa's singularity is pointed out by the brief characterisation included at the beginning of the novel *Tout-Monde*. Mycéa, whose full name is Marie Celat (her surname can be interpreted in various ways as denoting, among others, either: *celle la*, this one, *c'est là*, as in 'it is here', whereas her first name might allude to the bible's holy mother Mary), is referred to as the “*le secret et la clé des mystères du pays. Elle a connu tous les malheurs et approché toutes les vérités, comme une Inspiré*”²⁴² (TM 13). In a conversation with Chamoiseau, Glissant elaborated on what Mycéa meant

²⁴¹ See *La folie Celat* (LMI 2000).

²⁴² “the secret and the key to the mysteries of the country. She knows all the suffering and has approached all truths, like a visionary”, my translation.

to him:

Patrick Chamoiseau: “*Quand tu parles de Mycéa tu parles de la terre et de la blessure. Qu'est-ce que c'est, cette blessure ? Une blessure amoureuse?*”

Édouard Glissant: “*C'est la blessure de l'histoire. Un de sous-entendus de mon travail c'est qu'avant de la traite il se passe quelque chose entre les gens, les Longoué and the Béluse, et on va jamais savoir qu'est-ce que s'est passé.*”

Chamoiseau: “*Comment est-ce que tu définis la présence de Mycéa?*”

Glissant: “*C'est la seule possibilité d'aller au fond d'aventurier, d'aller au bout de ce mystère que je pose dans le pays d'avant. Je ne crois pas du tout à la possibilité de retrouver le village Africain. Je crois qu'il est plus beau d'imaginer l'infini de cette avant Africain. Il y a une splendeur d'illimité qu'on perd si on croit qu'on revient, qu'on retrouve. On retrouverai jamais. Est-ce est ça qui est beau. On fait autre chose [...] Quel est cette sorte de malédiction ? C'est plus profonde que toute cette analyses politiques ou sociologique. Pour moi Mycéa c'est ça*”²⁴³ (Christiani 1993).

The 'wound' or the 'curse' Glissant speaks about here links back to my discussion about the 'root cause' underlying the political problems of Martinique in 2.0. Glissant here referred to Mycéa as a fictional vehicle that allowed him to address the wound of history in Martinique, brought about by the slave trade and the broken ties to the African past. Elsewhere, Glissant also referred to his fictional characters as *functioning* like, being *similar* to or as *representing* entire landscapes (TM 476, IP 169). In addition to allowing or enabling Glissant to address a particular political problem, such the issue of a forgotten past, the notion of the landscape also evokes a more symbolic function in which fictional characters *stand for* something else, something larger than an individual personality, a collective.

In my own engagement with Mycéa I will not limit her character as performing any particular function. Instead I want to proceed from the idea that she is, like all of Glissant's fictional characters, multi-dimensional or multifunctional – thus not 'a singular being'. As several Glissant scholars have pointed out in that respect, his fictional characters could be seen as being in complex entanglements with accounts of Glissant's own life (Dash 1995, 7) – thereby forming part what I have conceptualised as the life-writing part of his political archive in 1.4.2. –, or as ways for Glissant to question his own political interrogations (Lasowski 2015, 403), the afore-mentioned 'feedback loop' for his political practice (Gallagher 2008, 11). I concur with all of these interpretations would like to add two more to them. In my reading, Glissant's fictional characters

²⁴³Chamoiseau: “When you speak of Mycéa you speak of the earth and the wound. What is this wound? Is this a wound of love?”; Glissant: “It's the wound of history! One of the underlying themes of my work is that something happened between the people before the trade, between the Longoué and the Béluse, and we will never know what it was. It is this impossibility of knowing what happened before the trade”; Chamoiseau: “How would you define the presence of Mycéa?”; Glissant: “The only possibility of moving past the superficial, to go to the heart of the mystery which I call the 'land before'. I do not at all believe in the possibility of finding the African again. I think it's more beautiful to imagine the infinity of this African past. There is a magnificence of limitlessness which one loses if one believes that it one will come again, that one will find again. You will never find again. And that's what is beautiful. You do something else. [...] What kind of curse it is ? It is more profound than all these political or sociological analysis. For me that's Mycéa”, my translation.

could also be seen as embodying a set of Glissant's philosophical concepts or ideas, thus operating like symbols or illustrations of abstract ideas, but also as abstract theoretical figures *whose trajectories sketch out a particular map of and movement into the world*.²⁴⁴ For the purpose of this thesis, I would thus suggest to read them as expressions of a lived politics of relation, taking the form of a movement of marronage.

If I, in the following, mainly refer to the personality and trajectory of Mycéa with occasional references to Glissant philosophical concepts, thus privileging a reading of the map traced by her path along with speculations pertaining to her larger symbolic function in Glissant's oeuvre, this is not to preclude the possibility of a reading that would take the complex formal ways into account with which Mycéa as a character has been woven into Glissant's oeuvre as a whole. Glissant's ambition was clearly not to render his characters with a degree of 'psychological density' (Condé 1976, 163). Instead they, for the most part, appear as abstract and symbolic figures whose life trajectories appear in dispersed fragments in the course of several novels. Puzzling these dispersed pieces together is left up to the reader. To read one of Glissant's fictional characters as I propose to do it here, as a 'whole', or as possessing a more or less congruent fictional personality, is thus not meant to disavow the chaotic, fragmented and multidimensional nature of Mycéa, but to follow her trajectory as a trace to pursue through the opaque forest of his fictional oeuvre.

3.2.1. No Need to Travel to See the World – Mycéa's Black Cosmopolitanism

In *La case du commandeur*, Mycéa's year of birth is marked as 1928, the same year as the eruption of the Mount Pelée volcano on Martinique (LCDC 13). As outlined in 2.2., her fictional appearance is thereby associated with the beginning of a new era, a new 'century' marked by the outbreak of a natural force. In terms of my interest in the permeable realms between fact and fiction, life and writing in Glissant's work, her fictional year of birth is furthermore remarkable in that it coincides with Glissant's own year of birth, and not with the actual year of the volcano eruption in 1902. This not only reiterates how Glissant privileged an imagination of the past over historic facts, it also points to possible entanglements between the fictional figure of Mycéa and Glissant's life-writing practice, a theme that will be taken up again further below.

At various moments in Glissant's novels, Mycéa is portrayed as a towering moral and visionary presence. As a child she is, for example, described as intellectually stronger than both of her parents at an early age (LCDC 8-9), her mother and father both being haunted by the "impossible memory of the land before" (LCDC 31). Her exceptional powers are also depicted in her adolescence, when Mycéa joins a group of aspiring writers and intellectuals. She pokes fun at her friends' ambition to remake the world (LCDC 146), but actively participates in the electoral

²⁴⁴ On the cartographic aspects of Glissant's oeuvre see the preface and section 6.0.

campaigns organised by the group, and the plot to assassinate the colonial administrator Garin, which forms the main storyline of *La Lézarde* (LL 46). Her rebellious and stubborn personality is repeatedly associated with the forest and the hideouts of the maroons. Her fascination with Raphaël Targin, who is also referred to as Thaël, descends from a family of maroon and illustrates this association. As the narrative voice remarks about, “There was something of the forest in Thaël and we knew Marie Celat was drawn to the hills. She confessed that she liked being lost in the dark and feeling the blackness on her back like a woollen shawl” (LCDC 146).

Instead of Thaël, who falls in love with Valérie, Mycéa chooses Mathieu as a partner, whose confusion is depicted as complementing her own certainty. In contrast to her self-assured, all-knowing and 'opaque nature', her group of friends appear as naïve and foolish (LCDC 150).²⁴⁵ Her talents are noted by a number of characters, like the seer Papa Longoué who refers to her as “the black women's Marie” (LCDC 148). Her peers also remark about her visionary powers that “perhaps she gazed deeper than anyone of us ever did into the abyss” (LCDC 145), the abyss once more refers to the unknown that separates the Caribbean from Africa, as elaborated in Glissant's exchange with Chamoiseau at the onset of this section. Mycéa's vision not only extends into the African past that has been erased from public discourse in Martinique, it also takes on the ultimate identification with the people as a whole and the struggle for a better future for the island that makes her “*une âme plus que nulle autre sensible aux perturbations de l'époque, à la mue forcenée de la terre, dont elle souffrait*”²⁴⁶ (LL 25).

Among her group of friends, Mycéa's visionary powers thus assign a peripheral position to Mycéa, and she repeatedly drifts away from them in ways that are associated with metaphorical acts of marronage by the narrator. Mycéa's first flight in *La Lézarde* leads her out of the city following her disappointment when she finds out that Mathieu is not in love with her but with Valérie. Running away she gets lost in the woods where the Lomé family, a poor rural farming household struggling in the post-plantation system takes her in (LL 69). Her disappearance from the group of political activists around Mathieu is both framed as an act of marronage and depicted as a case of 'merging with the masses' associated with the Celat family's more moderate position vis-à-vis the social split between slaves, maroons and *béké* more generally. Mycéa's time with the Lomé family acquaints her with the 'ordinary' life on the island, allowing her to familiarise herself with rural syndicalism and the importance of land redistribution. While she stays with the Lomé family, she teaches the Lomé children, taking the opportunity to present them with a decolonial version of the island's history in which their ancestors were slaves taken from across the world and not French as

245 Warning against any attempts at grasping Mycéa's 'true nature', the narrating voice in *Tout-Monde* remarks, “Vous ne connaissez pas Mycéa. Pas un ne peut le faire paraître [...] Marie Celat parle un langage que nous n'approchons pas” (You don't know Mycéa. No one can make her appear [...] she speaks a language that we cannot get close to) (TM 423, in italics in original).

246 “a soul that is attune to the events of the time like no other, suffering like no other from the rebirth of the earth”, my translation.

their school books would make them believe (LL 76). Once Mathieu is rejected by Valérie and realizes that he is destined to be with Mycéa she returns to the city to be with him.

After the political rupture brought about by the electoral success of the candidate the young group of activists supports, Mycéa is the only member of the group who remains on the island while Mathieu and his group of friends collectively escape to France to pursue their studies. Sceptical of her friends' escape Mycéa remarks, “What good is it to look into the salons if you don't know how to look into the night?” (LCDC 159), contrasting the knowledge acquired at French universities with the capacity to connect with the island's nature at a deeper level. In contrast to Mathieu, who struggles to find his path between his political and poetic ambitions, Mycéa has found her personal path, providing him with the stability to care for him when he suffers from a fever at the time of the election parade: “*Elle pressentait que c'était mortel d'ignorer le vertige (en méconnaissant ce qui l'engendrait) et mortel de s'y complaire sans fin*”²⁴⁷ (LQS 273).

After Mathieu moves to Paris, Mycéa remarries and raises three children on her own, an episode of her life that is only briefly mentioned in the novels where she appears. Following the tragic deaths of her two sons, she disappears or 'maroons' for a second time. Both of her sons, who carry the symbolically charged names Patrice – presumably after the assassinated Congolese president Lumumba – and Odon, die in tragic accidents: Patrice in a motorbike accident and Odon by drowning while diving in the sea. Their deaths appear to represent the main elements of the island, the land and the water, an interpretation that is supported by the remark that they died of “the main things we all shared in our free time” (LCDC 195). The suffering their deaths inflict on Mycéa takes on a metaphorical quality that can be read as another 'wound', representing the ills of the island in more general terms. Following her loss, she wonders about the island aimlessly in the second half of *La case du commandeur*, descending into what her neighbours diagnose as a form of madness, forcing her to be hospitalised. Madness here appears to be closer to a kind of excessive intelligence or spiritual superiority than an actual breakdown of the ability to 'think straight'.

Escaping from the psychiatric institution to which she is confined, Mycéa's flight into the forest is, once more, associated with a movement of marronage when she reconnects with her ancestors who she finds hiding in an abandoned overseer's cabin in a forest. Her escape from hospital thus not only mirrors the spatial escape of the maroons but also indicates the distance she covers in time to see into the depths of history (LCDC 205, MA 236), an aspect of Glissant's politics studied in the previous chapter. Mycéa's flight ends when the police finds her and return her to the hospital where she agrees to being 're-socialised' (LCDC 206-07). Upon her recovery she eventually reunites with her parents, and opts for a 'regular life'. *La case du commandeur* insinuates a

²⁴⁷“She knew that it was lethal not to know the vertigo, (by denying its cause) but just as lethal to swim in it endlessly”, my translation.

reconciliatory ending when the narrative voice notes, “Marie Celat had a job in an office and put up with what everybody puts up with” buying a colour TV for herself so that her father can come for daily visits (LCDC 207-08).

In *Tout-Monde*, this 'happy end' takes on an altogether different from. Continuing her story at a chronologically later point in time than where *La case du commandeur* left off, Mycéa reunites with Mathieu upon his return from France as an established poet in the 1980s (TM 403). Again, Mycéa's certainty, vision and knowledge complement Mathieu's struggle to find his own *langage* in his literary work. Her vision has allowed her to see 'the floor of the ocean with lines of bodies attached to iron balls' (LCDC 174), and to relive the middle passage through her experience of suffering and endurance, whereas “Mathieu's words were a vague blue. They simply took up space” (LCDC 167). Only once he returns from France and reunites with Mycéa does Mathieu's poetics gains in force and certainty as a result of acknowledging the location where it needs to be put to use, an allusion to the necessity of reconciling the moves of *detour* and *retour* (3.3.). In contrast to his own errantry, across France and back, Mycéa's language is described as maturing more readily into a poetics by blending analytical intelligence with a spiritual vision in line with Glissant's prophetic vision of the past (2.2.2.). Her growing interest in plants and herbs, specifically their usage as medical remedies, signify a more general turn to nature on which I will elaborate at greater length below (3.2.2.). On a more general level, her aforementioned interest in 'small plants' instead of 'big plants' also represents an appreciation of the modesty of everyday resistance over the country's heroism represented by the majestic presence of the 'big' mahogany tree whose stories are told by Mathieu (LCDC 167). She does not need to “use words to be in command of things”, like Mathieu. Hers is a more spiritual, less visible kind of power (LCDC 162).

In a final confrontation between the two, she accuses Mathieu for having left her alone to raise their kids. Rejecting a position as victim, she is, however, depicted as being at peace with herself and what she conceives as her role as a seer: “*Je suis la femme tombée d'abîme, qui a débordé sans compter*”²⁴⁸ (TM 416). In a grand finale, she exits via “*des chemins beaucoup plus souffrants que ceux qu'il a suivis*” (ways more hurtful than the pain she had endured” (TM 435), warning Mathieu: “*Je suis le roche*” (I am the rock) (TM 436) ... “*Prenez garde! Vous êtes bientôt la roche, vous aussi... Vous constatez, je suis disparue*” (Be careful! You will be the rock very soon, you too... See, I have disappeared) (TM 436). She then disappears for a third and final time. This time her marronage is described as a 'disappearance without moving' (TM 437).

In sum, and despite her physical movements on the island, the fact that Mycéa remained 'behind' while everyone else left at the first opportunity that presented itself, re-emphasises the

248 “I am the women who fell into the abyss, the one who is flowing over countless times”, my translation.

possibility of approaching the world without physically moving. Rooted in the landscape of Martinique, Mycéa's vision allows her to see the island's history and the relation to Africa ('the land before'), with greater clarity than all of the other characters. This knowledge, which she only shares with Mathieu, is part of the reason for her suffering. Glissant's characterisation of Mycéa at the beginning of *Tout-Monde* is worthy to be repeated here: "*Marie Celat ne parcourt pas dans les espaces, mais elle endure autant*" (She does not travel through vast spaces, but she endures so much) (TM 13). The verb 'to endure', which is also alluded to by Mycéa in a slightly different expression of "*Je suis la femme démasquée, qui a parcouru sans faiblir*" (I am the demasked woman, the one who endured without weakening" (TM 417), refers to a key term Glissant identified in the work of William Faulkner, as pointed out above (2.0.). Interpreting Faulkner's description of the opaque and silent, yet central, role African Americans play in his fictional work, Glissant argued in *Faulkner, Mississippi* (1996), that they are the key point of reference for Faulkner's whole oeuvre. In a similar vein, Mycéa's endurance and rootedness on the island appears to function as a central point of reference for the actions of all other Glissantian characters.

In this sense, Mycéa can be seen as embodying what could be termed a specific form of black cosmopolitanism that is not predicated on travelling the world, but is based on an relational imaginary of the world and a capacity to actively intervene in political terms. As Ifeoma Nwankwo has argued, this kind black cosmopolitanism is starkly different from its dominant understanding inherited from Enlightenment (2005, 9). Whereas European cosmopolitanism tended to engage with the world through a "*will or intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate what is manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world" (Said quoted in Nwankwo, 9), as a way of becoming 'citizens of the world', people of African descent were structurally denied access to this kind of cosmopolitan subjectivity. Black cosmopolitanism, for Nwankwo, therefore undercuts traditional understandings of cosmopolitanism since it is "born of the interstices and intersections between two mutually constitutive cosmopolitanisms – a hegemonic cosmopolitanism [...] and a cosmopolitanism that is rooted in a common knowledge and memory of that violence" (13). From this angle, the notion of a cosmopolitan person who 'loves to travel' is also problematised as reflecting structural racialised and classist inequalities. Since historically, 'travel' for black people in the Americas was controlled by the institution of slavery, "People of African descent found ways to move between physical and/or geographical sites" (13), which at times included conceptual movements pertaining to ideologies and identities. Glissant addressed this aspect in *Poétique de la Relation*, in a passage where he discussed the different kinds of movements of the 'arrowlike nomadism' of the conquering expeditions and the peaceful nomadism of an ideal 'tourist':

“At this point we seem to be far removed from the sufferings and preoccupations of those who must bear the world's injustice. Their errantry is, in effect, immobile. They have never experienced the melancholy and extroverted luxury of uprooting. They do not travel. But one of the constants of our world is that a knowledge of roots will be conveyed to them from within intuitions of Relation from now on“ (PR 19).

Nwankwo also points out that “not all those who display Black cosmopolitanism have a desire to travel, whether materially or conceptually in terms of the definition of self or community” (2005, 14), and Mycéa's trajectory might serve as a fitting case. As the 'black people's Mary' (Papa Longoué), the figure of Mycéa seems to stand for those 'who can or choose not to travel' but from who are intuitively attuned to the forces of creolisation, cultivating an imaginary of the world's diversity.

3.2.2. Crossing the Border Between Life and Writing – Mycéa Steps Out of the Text

In a particularly striking example of how Glissant worked to unsettle the divisions between the text and the extra-textual dimension, Mycéa reappears in *Tout-Monde* (1993), in an excursus called *Mycéa, c'est moi*, (I am Mycéa). The story marks an interlude within a multitude of narratives whose narrators change frequently. Several excerpts from Glissant's essay book *Traité du Tout-Monde* (1997) are inserted between these collections of different fictional stories, but in *Tout-Monde* they are all attributed to the character Mathieu Béluse, not the author Glissant, thus troubling the separation between the author and his fictional protagonist. In *Mycéa, c'est moi* this division is unsettled to an even larger extent when a woman appears in the office of a writer whose identity remains unspecified. Her intervention is presented as a rant covering 20 pages (TM 228-48), marked in quotation marks.

Identifying herself as Mycéa (TM 228), the woman confronts the author with a host of provocative statements, such as:

“Pourquoi voulez-vous toujours écrire des livres, vous tous, quand il est si convenant de s'asseoir et de parler en faisant semblant de tout comprendre et en laissant filer la voix? L'ombrage est favorable pour la parole. Voyez-vous, monsieur, votre livre n'est pas fini tant que vous n'avez trouvé dans un pays inconnu quelqu'un comme moi qui s'assied là et qui le récite mot à mot“²⁴⁹ (TM 232).

By claiming that the book is not finished until someone in some 'unknown country' takes it upon herself to recite it or actually bring it to life, the woman who claims to be Mycéa effectively challenges the author to move from the textual to the extra-textual dimension. Creating a work of fiction is useless, she insists, if it is not embodied in real life. This episode underlines once more that in cases where Glissant troubles the function between author and narrator, this is not meant as a

²⁴⁹“Why do you always want to write books, all of you, when it is so agreeable to sit down and talk and pretend to understand everything and let the voice spin? It is more convenient to talk in the shade. See, mister, your book is not finished until you haven't found someone like me, in an unknown country, who sits down and recites it, word for word”, my translation.

merely deconstructive gesture or postmodern eccentricity. Instead, both the author and the reader are literally being pushed out of the text to reflect on the connections between fiction and fact, between writing and life.

Not allowing her interlocutor time to respond to her charges, she goes on to recount the story of a woman named Anastasie. In her account of Anastasie's life, she worked as a housemaid for a colonial administrator and his wife. Following a traumatic experience of abuse at the hand of the administrator at the age of 14 she cannot stop talking (TM 235). After her escape from the household, she tells the author about how she wrote a 'letter to the world' and sent it off to people in many countries in South America and the Caribbean whose names she invented: "*J'ai écrit au monde entier. J'ai fait une lettre, bien bâtie dans ma tête, je pense qu'on aurait dit que c'est la folie. Mais c'était ordonné dans ma tête*"²⁵⁰ (TM 244). In her state of alleged madness, Anastasie walks about aimlessly on the island, visible, yet invisible to other people, a fate she associates with Mycéa: "*Je suis debout la comme Marie Celat, monsieur, mais je suis invisible dans la cérémonie. Le gens croient qu'ils me voient, mais en réalité c'est leur ombrage. Marie Celat est invisible, dans tout le pays vous ne pouvez pas voir une seule fois son corps*"²⁵¹ (TM 247). While telling her own story in a confused manner, she continues to correct the author's own account in his novels by claiming, for example, that Mycéa, actually, loved Thaël more than Mathieu (TM 237), which arguably shifts her addressee closer to Glissant, the author of the book, than to the narrator Mathieu.²⁵²

After having listened to her account, the narrator observes the writer's reaction to Anastasia's monologue and follows his stream of thought. His discomfort is described in the following terms: "*Il était restait sans bouger, tremblant en dedans de lui-même, rien qu'a devoir écouter, osant a peine la regarder, se demandant comment il allait terminer la séance*"²⁵³ (TM 248). This general sense of unease and inability to respond to the woman who claims to be Mycéa, is aggravated by the knowledge that there are millions of similar stories 'all over the world, at the same time, in the same moment' (TM 249). The author's thoughts are still depicted as circling around an appropriate response to Anastasia's rant, when she gets up and leaves him in a paralysed state, with a 'light smile' (TM 249). Thinking about her story, her trauma and her suffering, the author notes that "*elle n'était la victime de personne et qu'elle savait, elle seule, ce qu'endurer veut dire*"²⁵⁴ (TM 251). The

250 "I have written to the whole world. I have written a letter, nicely constructed in my head, I think one would say it is madness. But it was ordered in my head", my translation.

251 "I am crazy like Marie Celat mister, but I am invisible throughout the ceremony. The people think that they can see me, but in reality its their shadow. Marie Celat is invisible, in none of the countries do you get to see her body a single time", my translation.

252 She is certain that Thaël would not have been able to lead her in front of the dogs the way he did Valerie saying that, there was 'too much weight and suffering in Mycéa' (TM 238).

253 "He just sat there without moving, trembling in himself, nothing to do but to listen, not daring to look at her, asking himself how he could end the session", my translation.

254 "She was not anyone's victim, and she knew, she alone, what it means to endure", my translation.

verb to endure can be linked back, once more, both to Mycéa's suffering and Glissant's analysis of the curse haunting the US South in the works of Faulkner as mentioned before. In a conversation with an unnamed friend, the author later associates Anastasie's story to the global injustice inflicted on 'three billion poor people' at the hand of 'one billion wealthy people' (TM 251). The woman who identifies with Mycéa thus gains the importance of an embodiment of those who are oppressed by the forces of neoliberal globalisation, an oppression marked by a strong gendered dimension, and whose suffering is structurally invisibilised.

This brief interlude not only breaks the division between fiction and life-writing. It also directly associates Mycéa's fictional character to the question of power between the rich and the poor, and more specifically to how violence plays out in gender relations marked by the history of slavery. Whereas the pain and suffering of the fictional Mycéa are cast as stemming more abstractly from the broken relation between the Caribbean present and the African past, in the *Mycéa, c'est moi*, Anastasie's suffering takes on a different meaning, one that is tied to the experience of millions of victims of abuse and sexual violence, and of structural oppression. By stepping out of the fictional realm, she thus creates a direct link between the loose assembly of stories contained in *Tout-Monde* and the issue of structural injustice on a global scale. Although it remains unclear who *exactly*, Anastasie and the author are, whether Glissant actually had such an encounter or imagined it, the charge put forward by Anastasie, that the characters of the book have to be relatable beyond the text, that they have to be felt and embodied real people in order to *matter* reiterate the notion introduced in 1.4.3., that, in the context of Glissant's politics of relation, it is not enough to write.

3.2.3. Re-Inscribed Political Action – Mycéa's Ecological Turn

As mentioned in the previous sub-section, one of the transitions the character of Mycéa undergoes in Glissant's fictional oeuvre is towards a growing interest in the natural world, especially the healing powers of herbs growing in the tropical vegetation of the island.²⁵⁵ Mycéa's initiation into the secrets of the natural world is marked by her entering what others perceive to be a state of 'madness' and what I have referred to as a kind of spiritual marronage above. Instead of a flight into space it is a flight into the depths of human knowledge. This transition is particularly marked in the novel *Mahagony* (1987), where her character appears at a relatively late point, in the chapter *Le Tout-Monde*. One of its sub-chapters titled *Marie Celat* contains an internal monologue, in which Mycéa speaks in an inspired state, which the text formally marks through a pronounced poetic style of writing. Speaking at length about being immersed into the natural world of

²⁵⁵As I have mentioned above in passing, the movement 'into nature', which is at the same time also a movement that bridges the binary between man and nature, is also performed by another central female character in Glissant's fictional oeuvre, namely Flore Gaillard, the leader of a maroon gang in Saint Lucia in the 18th century. Her fiercest antagonist is a 'cribo' snake with which her gang 'shares the forest, and from whose perspective parts of the narrative are recounted' (OD 35- 36).

Martinique, she refers once more to the difference between the so-called 'big and small plants': “*quand je pars dans mon reve, les grands plants ne me font pas peur, c'est tout comme des herbes, je navigue la nuit en plein dans le bois*”²⁵⁶ (MG 169). As I have mentioned in 2.2.2., with regards to Glissant's mode of historiography, the 'big and small' plants can both be understood literally as well as figuratively when Mycéa appeals for greater attention being paid to seemingly small aspects of life that tend to get overshadowed by more impressive appearances. Bearing in mind the powerful herbal effects of small plants, the difference between small and big is thus also effectively relativised and cannot be equated with important and unimportant. Having found the cause to which she wants to dedicate the rest of her life, she states, “*Mon sujet, c'est les herbes, avec des gens alentour*” (my subject are the herbs, with people surrounding it) (MA 169). Continuing to work in the tradition of female healers who carried their knowledge of herbs and plants from Africa to the Caribbean following the crossing of the Atlantic – a specific 'female' occupation in Glissant's fictional renditions of life on the plantation and the hills²⁵⁷ – Mycéa works on an alternative categorisation of herbs. Instead of inventing new names for herbs in the tradition of Western biology, she loosely groups them according to their form and functions: “*Les herbes qui cassent, les herbes qui enroulent, les herbes qui piquent, les herbes qu'on boit*”²⁵⁸ (MG 172). As if to re-emphasise that she leads a (fictional) life on her own, and echoing the issues raised by the *Mycéa c'est moi* sub-chapter in *Tout-Monde*, she also repeatedly 'steps out of the story' and refers to the author of the book as a friend, and 'someone who has written books about the name of one of her sons' “*On a fait des livres sur son nom, vous croyez, que cet ami a écrit tout au long sur mon histoire, mais c'était pour expliquer ce nom-la*”²⁵⁹ (MG 173). In her inspired state of mind, she also presents the reader with a dystopian vision of Martinique. In a visualisation of what Glissant referred to as 'successful colonisation' in *Le discours antillais*, she speaks about Martinique in the following way:

“*Martinique est un musée. Le musée de la colonie. On a installé une verrière sur tout le pays, pour le distinguer des autres. Les cargos ariens entrent par des fenêtres qu'on ouvre à des heures fixes. On filtre l'air du dehors, pour que les microbes n'envahissent pas. Les passagers débarquent dans le paradis*”²⁶⁰ (MG 178).

To emphasise the charge levelled against Martinicans self-inflicted confinement into a

256 “when I enter my dreams, I am not afraid of the big plants, they are like all the herbs, I navigate the forest in the middle of the night”, my translation.

257 Glissant's reliance on naturalised gender binaries, as evoked in this context, warrants more sustained analysis from a feminist or queer theoretical perspective, as suggested by Rachel Rothender (2015).

258 “The herbs that break, the herbs that wind up, the herbs that sting, the herbs one can drink”, my translation.

259 “They have dedicated books to his name, you think that this friend has written all of my history, but it was just to explain this name”, my translation.

260 “Martinique is a museum. The museum of the colony. They installed a glass ceiling all over the country to distinguish it from others. The planes enter through a window that is opened at set times. They filter in the air from outside, so that the microbes don't invade it. The passengers step out into paradise”, my translation.

metaphorical colonial museum further, she sees a tourist advert announcing: “*Nous sommes fiers de vous présenter une colonie à l'état pur, telle qu'elles existaient depuis le temps de plantations*”²⁶¹ (MG 178). Mycéa's vision of Martinique as a colonial museum can be perceived as the horror scenario against which Glissant and his fictional characters struggle in different, yet somewhat parallel, ways (see 4.1.2.). For the fictional character Mycéa, the struggle had, among less visible aspects, initially consisted of an engagement for a local politician to take political control of the island (in *La Lézarde*), the teaching of decolonial history to the Lomé family and her own children (in *La case du commandeur*). In the latter part of her life, the mode of struggle takes on the new form of becoming a natural healer as part of her (re)discovery of the natural realm as being as important as the matters of human beings. She thus finally finds her own *langage*, a style that is neither poetry, nor systematic analysis, but a 'complete poetics', according to the narrator, bestowing on her the combined role of a healer and a social analyst (MG 178). In this sense, she can be considered as taking the next step from Papa Longoué's vocation as seer, by effectively combining a consciousness of relation towards the past and the present, with an ecological consciousness.

Cured by Carmel's Project of a Pays biologique du monde

In the novel *Mahagony* (1987), Mycéa's return to a 'normal' state of mind, which the narrative formally indicates by a return to prose, is not attributed to a specific external factor. The spiritual marronage she has experienced into the areas that remain inaccessible to others abruptly comes to an end, and she decides that it is time to return 'home'.²⁶² In the novel *Ormerod* (2003), which was published several years later, Mycéa's recovery is more directly attributed to an external factor, namely Carmel's project to turn the island into a *pays biologique du monde*. This marked 'incoherence' in Glissant's fictional oeuvre emphasises its openness to variation and adjustments over the need for coherence and realism. Towards the end of the *Ormerod*, Carmel is said to have a vision of, “*un Lieu de beauté du monde, un Lieu entièrement et biologiquement sain*”²⁶³ (OD 344-45). The actual content of the project remains vague in the book itself, but contrasted with Mycéa's vision of Martinique as a 'successful colony' in *Mahagony*, the *pays biologique* is the utopian counter-part to Mycéa's bleak vision of Martinique's future. This line of reading is supported when Mycéa is depicted in the following terms in response to Carmel's proposition: “*Marie Celat, la dame éternelle souriait, ses yeux à peine ouverts semblaient nous consoler de nos aveuglements, nous avons compris à ce moment-là qu'elle était comment dire sortie de folie*”²⁶⁴ (OD 344-45).

As with all of Glissant's fictional characters, Carmel's personality is not further described,

261 “We are proud to present to you a colony in its purest state, in the same way they existed since the times of the plantations”, my translation.

262 “*J'étais bien loin, bien loin. Il faut rentrer maintenant*” (I have gone very far, very far. Now it is time to go home) (MG 236-37).

263 “a Place of the world's beauty, a Place fully and biologically healthy”, my translation.

264 “Marie Celat, the eternal smiling lady, with her eyes barely open she seemed to console our own blindnesses, that is when we understood that she had left her madness, so to speak, behind”, my translation.

remaining abstract or 'flat'. When she appears 'out of nowhere' she is described in as a woman who, by appearance, led a life like everyone else, but in private had for some time studied all aspects pertaining to the vegetation and the animals living on the island, like and 'inspired poet' (OD 344). Among other possible interpretations of this aspect, Carmel's ordinariness, insinuates that significant political propositions can come from all parts of society and cannot be expected to be produced by the elite. The character Evora, who reappears in the *Annexe of Ormerod* – despite her previous passing as a result of a plane crash (OD 341), readily associates herself with Carmel's project, lending it even greater significance as the expression of a relational consciousness, with which Glissant had associated Evora's work of art (3.1.2). The contents of Carmel's project is not further elaborated in *Ormerod* itself. As indicated by the formulation “*les gens de poésie et de roman se mirent du côté de ces deux femmes sans limites, ils défendirent le Projet*”²⁶⁵ (OD 341), it did, however, have another existence *outside the realm of fiction*, in that it refers to a political initiative launched by Glissant, Chamoiseau as well as Bertène Juminer and Gérard Delver. Described by Noudelmann as indicative of a more general opening of Glissant's political thought to ecological concerns (2018, 340), the project was first launched in January 2000 in a newspaper article titled *Manifeste pour un projet global*,²⁶⁶ published in the Antilles by *Antilla* and in France by *Le Monde*.

3.2.4. Glissantian Globalised Political Action – The Case of the *Manifeste pour un projet global*

In her essay *Globalization and Political Action in the Work of Edouard Glissant* (2009) (1.3.1.), Celia Britton mentions what she calls 'Glissant's ecological project for Martinique' as the direct expression of a kind of political action that adjusts to the context of a globalised world by reconciling local action with a relational understanding of the world, thus reiterating Glissant's insistence that “There are concrete campaigns of resistance that must be fought. In the place in which one is” (quoted in Britton 2009, 9).

A closer engagement with this project, and its appearance in different parts of Glissant's oeuvre promises to be particularly instructive since it can not only be seen as the concretisation of the worldly movement of Glissant's marronage, but also as a precursor to a set of public interventions launched by Glissant in the last decade of his life which I have listed under his 'activism' earlier (see 1.3.3.). For Loïc Céry, who writes about the *Manifeste pour un projet global* (henceforth *Projet*) on the website of the *Institut du Tout-Monde*²⁶⁷ – thus marking another formal

²⁶⁵“the people of poetry and novels assembled around these two boundless women, they defended the Project”.

²⁶⁶The manifesto was first published in *Antilla*, N° 867, on January 14, 2000. It was republished by *Le Monde* on January 21, 2000 under the title *Manifeste pour refonder les DOM*.

²⁶⁷The reference to Céry and the *Projet* refers to the following website: <http://tout-monde.com/dossiers10a.html>, accessed March 27, 2020.

movement of the initiative into the digital realm via an institution established by Glissant –, views the intervention as effectively producing a rupture in the political discourse of the Antilles which she sees perceives as having been characterised until then by 'institutional immobility and ideologic conformity'. Making the case that the project could be seen in the tradition of Glissant's anticolonial activism in the 1960s she writes:

“Everything happens at this crucial turning point, as if the anticolonial strategies, so often revisited, finally find a new formulation, a delinked employment that is conscious of the current impasse: of the sclerosis of departmentalisation, of the unthinkable damages inflicted by global capitalism, of an identity that cannot be translated into sovereignty”.²⁶⁸

As Céry points out, the immediate context of the *Projet* was a geopolitical shift within the French sphere of influence marked by a so-called 'Plan for Corsica' launched by the French prime minister Lionel Jospin that foresaw a growing degree of autonomy for the island, including the creation of an independent assembly. After decades in which the status of islands like Corsica and the French Oversea Departments like Martinique and La Réunion remained unquestioned, this initiative sparked a new dynamic of discussion into which the *Projet* directly intervened. Glissant and Chamoiseau both appeared on a television show of the *Antilles Television* shortly following Jospin's announcement and made the case for greater autonomy for Martinican politics, as it was elaborated in the manifesto. In the larger context of Glissant's political practice, these deliberate public appearances, are noteworthy in that they mark the moment when Glissant became markedly visible as a public intellectual, as I have mentioned in the previous chapter (2.3.).

On a textual level, the manifesto begins by, once more, strongly underlining the meaning of the 'worldly' direction of Glissant's politics. Its opening statement announces: “*Le monde, et non pas seulement la France, est à notre horizon*” (The world and not only France is at our horizon). The signatories go on to specify that through departmentalisation France allowed them access to 'its world', and that now “*Il nous faut accéder par nous-mêmes aux horizons du monde*” (We have to access the horizons of the world ourselves). These worldly horizons are comprised of 'universal agreements and antagonisms', which, in the light of Glissant's notion of Relation, can be read as being composed by both harmonious and conflicting cross-cultural interactions. The insistence on the world as 'horizon' also implies breaking out of the suffocating confinement into a Francophone world that claims to be total and hermetically closed to other worlds, as illustrated by Mycéa's vision of Martinique as a colonial museum. As with all of the manifestos written or co-written by Glissant, the *Projet* is presented as a collective text, and a proposition more than an attempt to

²⁶⁸“*Tout se passe en ce tournant crucial, comme si les schèmes de l'anticolonialisme, tant parcourus auparavant, trouvaient dans ce moment de formulation nouvelle, un déploiement décuplé et prenant acte des impasses de l'heure: celle de d'une sclérose de la départementalisation, celle d'un impensé des dégâts d'un capitalisme mondialisé, celle d'une identité qui ne trouve pas de traduction de souveraineté*”, my translation.

dictate or indoctrinate. Writing in their capacity as, and not in the name of, citizens of Guadeloupe, Martinique and French Guyana – which are cast as bound by deep historical and cultural ties –, the manifesto itself proceeds from what could be called an archipelagic basis. Reiterating some of the concerns that were at the basis of the creation of *Front des Antillais et Guyanais pour l'Autonomie* in 1961 (LAGHD), the manifesto continues with a critique of the politics of departmentalisation, contrasting some of its positive results, such as increased standards of living, with its negative effects, which are mainly identified in the powerlessness of local powers vis-à-vis the central government in Paris, and in the social sphere as a “*syndrome d'assistanat généralisé, de dépendance accrue, et d'une anesthésie qui se renforçait à mesure que les transferts publics augmentaient en ampleur*”²⁶⁹.

Instead of directly entering a debate on the official status of Martinique, which Céry identifies as the main burden weighing down Martinican political debates, the signatories begin by claiming, in line with Glissant's philosophy, that this 'access to the world' would first of all require an 'autonomy of thought, a sovereignty of the imaginary, the freedom of the spirit'. The problem of departmentalisation or dependence on France is not cast as a categorical issue in the manifesto in the sense that the signatories are under no illusion that there is a way out of dependencies and interdependencies in a globalised world. The crucial aspect for them is to claim the right to the possibility of self-organisation. The generally diplomatic or non-confrontational aspect of the *Manifeste* is re-emphasised towards the end of the text, where they repeat their essential and self-evident claim, that the people of Martinique, Guyana and Guadeloupe, should be allowed to deal with their own environmental concerns, access international institutions and vote an assembly in place, that would carry the responsibility to handle these matters. This claim is not equated with a radical cutting of ties with France. In other words, instead of advocating for a complete rupture with the links to France, they make a case for more spaces of sovereignty, not for complete sovereignty, a subtle but important difference that I will interrogate further in 4.1.2.: “*Seuls les espaces de souveraineté, rendus nécessaires par un projet global, peuvent supporter le nouveau, l'inattendu, la combinaison imprévisible, l'organisme Vivant qui évolue et qui s'équipe. Seul l'espace de souveraineté permet l'auto-organisation, qui ne se ramène pas à une élémentaire autogestion*”²⁷⁰. More so than on material grounds, the main problem brought about by departmentalisation is thus attributed to the way it prevents a freedom of thought, by bringing all political debates back to a paradigm of “*dépendance-assistanat*”.

269 “syndrome of generalised begging for handouts, of accumulated dependence, of an anaesthesia that is reinforced every time the money invested in social services is increased”, my translation.

270 “Only sovereign spaces, which become necessary for a global project, can bring about the new, the unforeseen, the unpredictable combination, the Living organism that evolves and that equips itself. Only sovereign spaces allow for self-organisation, which cannot be reduced to a basic question of self-governance”, my translation.

This short-circuiting of a political debate in which France remains the paradigmatic frame of reference can be related back to Glissant's claim introduced in 1.4.3., that the kind of domination produced in a colonial setting shaped by transplantation is the kind that “provides, on its own, models of resistance to the stranglehold it has imposed, thus short-circuiting resistance while making it possible”. It is only by escaping out of this imaginary confinement that a future-oriented political project can be developed for Glissant et. al. The call launched by the manifesto, towards a new culture of public engagement, accordingly, reads as follows:

“Que pouvons-nous faire ensemble pour exister au monde ? Comment concilier notre nécessaire responsabilité collective avec les réalités économiques universellement et féroce­ment triomphantes ? Le moment est venu de débattre publiquement de ce que beaucoup d'entre nous pensent, l'un à part l'autre”²⁷¹.

Instead of claiming to speak on behalf a particular constituency – as was the case in Glissant's singular elaboration of a national centre for the memorialisation of slavery in France (2.3.2.) – the manifesto thus waits to be taken up by others in a public forum, since “*Il ne serait pas viable si une seule composante de notre réalité s'en tenait à l'écart ou en était exclue, par quelque mécanisme ou quelque préjugé*”²⁷². This kind of 'total' approach endorsed by the *Projet*, can be detected in the way it does not limit itself to any particular realm but seeks to include all concerned sectors from agriculture, tourism, fishing, nature preservation, communication, and education.

It is via the call for a new culture of debate and collective re-evaluation of the official political status of Martinique that the manifesto arrives at the call for a transformation of the local mode of production from one that is exclusively geared towards consumption of goods produced in France, towards a local mode of diversified biological production that would produce actual economic value that could translate into social development. That this proposal is made *within* not *outside* the logic of the global market economy becomes evident when the signatories proceed to make the case for the introduction of a marketing label to be placed on locally produced goods stating: “*Martinique pays à production biologique*” (Martinique, land of biologic production), or “*Martinique, premier pays biologique du monde*” (Martinique, first biologic country of the world). The important aspect to emphasise at this point is that the small size of the island would theoretically make the implementation of this vision relatively easy. The systematic blocking of such utopian projects, which they writers attribute to an unbroken colonial imaginary dominating the island, is the deadlock which the writers of the manifesto attempt to overcome.

271 “What can we do together to exist on this earth? How can we reconcile our necessary collective responsibility with the ferociously and universally dominant economic realities? The time has come to debate what many of us think publicly, from one part to another”, my translation.

272 “It would not be viable if any composing aspect of our reality would remain at a distance or excluded by any mechanism or prejudice”, my translation.

Mediating the Manifesto's Failures – Glissant's Lamentation in La Cohée du lamentin

Although the effects of the manifesto are hard, if not impossible, to measure, Céry argues that they are tangible, both in Glissant's own work and the more frequent public interventions that followed the *Projet*, as well as in what she takes to be a more general trend towards a Caribbean *écopolitique*.²⁷³ Still, the attempts by Glissant and Chamoiseau to convince French and Martinican politicians as well as gathering stronger support from the Martinican population failed. Their audience was limited to a few smaller civil associations. In a similar pattern as the move of the *Centre national pour la mémoire des esclavages* to the website of the *Institut du Tout-Monde* (2.3.), the *Projet* from the realm of organisational action into the realm of fiction as outlined above in Mycéa's enthusiastic response to it, and, moreover, into his essayistic work. Towards the end of the collection of essays published as *La cohée du Lamentin*, Glissant commented on the hostile response the *Projet* received in the following terms:

*“la réaction générale fut de peur, d'indifférence, de dérision. Les pays qui dépérissent aussi lente-ment peuvent se permettre ces sortes de renvois. Comparée à la situation d'horreur fixe et d'urgence mortelle de la plupart des pays dans le monde, celle de la Martinique, mal à l'aise mais protégée des famines, des épidémies et des massacres, lui permet d'attendre à peu près”*²⁷⁴ (LCDL 251-52).

The risk of the 'disappearance of the country', which Glissant prophesies Martinique in this quote can be attributed both to the growing danger of rising sea levels due to climate change, as it can be read as its disappearance in the imaginary realm. In other words, if the Martinican people cannot emancipate themselves from the confinement to a closed French world, the very notion of a Martinican people that can be referred to as such will eventually die. On a positive note Céry points out that the ecological concerns brought forward by the *Projet* are now more prominently represented on the agenda of the Caribbean Community CARICOM. In terms of the Antillean context and the question of Martinique's official status, Céry moreover argues that the creation of a new *Collectivité territoriale de Martinique* in 2016, which signifies an increased degree of political autonomy of Martinique, can also be seen as the result of initiatives like the *Projet*. She furthermore points out that the *Projet* can be seen in connection with more contemporary political currents such as the electoral victory of an alliance formed by right wing departmentalists and independentists at the regional Martinican elections. Although the status of Martinique as Department was once more confirmed during a referendum in 2003, and although the call for growing autonomy was expressed by this alliance is waged on different ideological grounds, it expressed a growing sentiment among

²⁷³The timeliness of the ecological thrust of the manifesto was moreover confirmed by an external factor. In 2000 an ecological scandal erupted in Martinique around the usage of a chlordecone, a pesticide used for the cultivation of bananas that infected the drinking water and is said to have had effect on growing cancer rates (Noudelmann 2018, 340-41)

²⁷⁴“The general response was one of fear, of derision. The countries that slowly wither away can allow themselves these kinds of dismissals. Compared to the horrific situation and lethal urgencies in most countries of the world, the Martinican situation, ill at ease but protected from famines, epidemics and massacres, allow it wait more or less”, my translation.

Martinicans towards the necessity a more spaces of sovereignty.

What I would like to retain here is less how novel or influential Glissant's intervention with the *Projet* was in the framework of decolonial eco-criticism of the region more generally (Ferdinand 2019). With my focus not being geared towards the specificities of the political Antillean landscape, it is hard to evaluate its actual resonances. Of greater interest for my study of the worldly dimension of Glissant's political practice is, once more, how Glissant linked ecological concerns with the necessity of developing a 'sovereign the imagination' and the ability to endorse an alternative world-view beyond the colonial blinkers as forming part of a relational political action in a globalised world.

Section Summary

This section further expanded the meaning of the worldly marronage outlined in 3.1. by no longer mainly referring to a spatial movement, but by also exploring a kind of marronage that takes place in the imaginary or spiritual realm. The character of Mycéa does not need to physically move in order to enter into a relation with the whole-world, to 'see' the surrounding islands, the past before the rupture of the slave trade and the spiritual presence of the natural world which the colonial project objectified. By tracing her trajectory across several novels, her ability to see what remains invisible to others emerged, both, as a sense of marronage associated with a notion of 'madness' (abnormality), as well as the seemingly opposite direction, namely an 'anti-elitist' 'merging with the masses' or becoming one with the people by accepting a way of life 'like everyone else' (normality). Mycéa's marronage explores both directions in ways that allow the reader to detect the ability to relate to the world in seemingly ordinary and extra-ordinary ways of being in the world. The bridging of fictional and non-fictional realms, which 3.1. alluded to before, is intensified by the character of Mycéa and specifically in sub-chapter dedicated to an allegedly 'real' person identifying with her personality. By troubling the distinction between narrator, author and character, but also by repeatedly insisting on the necessity of moving out of the discursive realm, Mycéa's marronage could be linked to the notion of a black cosmopolitanism, that does not need to travel the world to be in solidarity with a host of local struggles for visibility and recognition.

Of particular significance for Mycéa's politics was her 'natural turn' from *Mahagony* onwards. Read through the lens of a movement towards the world, the privileging of a relational imagination that does not rely on a hierarchy of importance among living beings can be framed as *a movement towards the natural world*. This movement directly contributes to debates concerned with reconciling ecocritical and postcolonial concerns by, among other factors, seriously question the conceptions of space, time and the human subject inherited from colonialism (DeLoughrey and Handley 2011). This chapter outlined the spatial conception Glissant proposed for such a project,

namely a conception that relates local spaces to the global vision of the Tout-Monde, akin to what Paul Gilroy has formulated as a 'planetary consciousness' or a “worldly vision which is not another imperialistic particular dressed up in universal garb” (quoted in Bartels et al. 2019, 116).²⁷⁵

What began as a troubling of the borders between fiction and non-fiction in *Mycéa, c'est moi*, was expanded even further once Mycéa's character was associated with a political initiative launched by Glissant in the extra-textual realm, a project that spells out what kind of political practice Glissant envisioned that would take the 'world' as point of reference, or that would be inspired by a worldly imagination. Particularly noteworthy about Glissant's ecological engagement was how it was linked to a reconsideration of Martinique's institutional arrangement with France. Thinking politically with Glissant here meant to, first of all, free oneself from the political parameters imposed by the former colonising power, and to attack the larger issue of Martinique's ongoing coloniality from the root up, or wholistically, instead of exclusively responding to it on a relatively narrow institutional level. Opening up to a plurality of worlds instead implies the possibility of fundamentally rethinking Martinique's place in the world and how it wants to enter into a relation with other islands and continents. In this vein, Glissant's *Projet* suggests that Martinicans could gain a sense of pride in the vision of being 'the first fully biologically sane place in the world' – a 'national interest' that would require an effort from all sectors of Martinican society. The diplomatic approach underlying the *Projet* was also noted as differing distinctly from a radical call for insurgency or revolution.

²⁷⁵The previous chapter has outlined the sense of time corresponding to this world-vision. The conception of human subjectivity and the relation between humans and non-humans will be taken up more directly in the ensuing chapter, but also runs across this thesis as the non-binary characteristic of Glissant's intellectual marronage (see also 6.3.).

3.3. Leaving Traces in the Tout-Monde – Glissant's Personal Marronage Into the World

*“Je maronne, songeait-il, mais pas plus que pour les anciens marrons,
ce n'est pas que je prends la fuite”*²⁷⁶

– Édouard Glissant, *Tout-Monde* (TM 147)

The previous two sections traced the movement towards the world in Glissant's fictional oeuvre, which I take to be characteristic for his conception of marronage and his political practice at large. In the process, I have pointed out the dynamic Glissant's literary work entertained with the non-fictional realm, particularly by branching out into the realm of life-writing (3.2.2.) and discursive interventions into concrete institutional set-ups (3.2.3, 3.2.4.). This section pursues a somewhat inverted direction by asking: In what ways can Glissant's life be considered as taking the form of a marronage into the world? In line with the main interest of this thesis, this is tied to the interrogation of the implications of this personal performance of marronage for his general politics of relation.

In responding to these questions I will begin with an interrogation of the life-writing aspect of Glissant's political archive, as conceptualised in the introduction. In line with the general thrust of this chapter, I loosely group this work into two movements, one from the island to the archipelago (3.3.1.), and one from the archipelago to the world (3.3.2.). As I will argue, the two institutions created by Glissant, the *Institut martiniquais d'études* and the *Institut du Tout Monde*, can also be seen as tracing a direction of flight from the island to the Caribbean, and from the Caribbean to the whole-world. As will become apparent, the narrative emerging from several converging discourses on Glissant's life, including his own fictional and non-fictional self-referential writings, can be viewed as taking the form of a myth (2.0.) that serves to substantiate or reinforce Glissant's political and philosophical claims and seeks to position Glissant's trajectory as an epic narrative. This follows Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith's claim that life-writing is not a politically neutral practice but strives to reinforce a specific set of values or perspective (1.4.3.).

Although, as Richard Price observed “Rare was the Caribbean intellectual or artist of the 1960s, 1970s or 1980s who failed to compare himself to a maroon!” (Price 1973, xiii), associating the historical experience of maroons, to the life of an intellectual in the 20th and 21st century might at first seem misplaced. Since one strand of this relational study of Glissant's politics of relation is, however, based on the assumption that Glissant claimed for his work to constitute a whole, a transversal reading of the interplay between different modes of political action could also

²⁷⁶“I am marooning, he thought, but not any more like the ancient maroons, I am not running away”, my translation.

interrogate the 'personal' dimension of Glissant's work by asking whether or in what ways Glissant's trajectory can be seen as a kind of marronage. Instead of celebrating an 'inborn tendency to resist' in Glissant, based on the alleged maroon heritage of his family (Noudelmann 2018, 203), – an approach that would be incompatible with Glissant's privileging of spiritual inheritance over biological filiation – I suggest to focus more strongly on Glissant's personal trajectory and the choices he made along the way as indicative of a practice of 'modern marronage'. In his biography, Noudelmann mentions several cases as potentially lending this line of inquiry further support.

'Un véritable marronage'? Glissant in Algeria and Cuba

Noudelmann, in this vein, recalls that Glissant referred to his under-cover activities for the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) in the late 1950s, as a case of 'modern day marronage' (2018, 169-71). To my knowledge, Noudelmann's account of the three months Glissant spent at the Algerian-Moroccan border is the first written record of this episode of his life. Under the code name 'Salah' Glissant allegedly travelled to Morocco to intercept Martinican conscripts into the French army, providing them with false papers and channelling them across the Algerian border to fight on the side of the FLN in their war against France. As Noudelmann writes in a formulation that insinuates that Glissant shared this interpretation, "*Pour Édouard, il s'agit d'un véritable marronage permettant à des Antillais soumis de gagner les terres clandestines de la liberté*"²⁷⁷ (170). Whether Noudelmann or Glissant claimed that his sojourn at the Algerian border was a 'different kind of marronage' remains unclear. The fact that little is known about his passage in Algeria outside of Noudelmann's book does, neither have to mean that it was invented nor that it was true.²⁷⁸ Again, whether the account is *true or false* is not as important as the fact that *the story exists and does something* as a piece of life-writing. In terms of what this episode *does* once it is introduced into debates surrounding his political legacy, its prominence in Noudelmann's book appears to be mainly geared towards lending Glissant's 'struggle credentials' further weight in response to the criticisms formulated by Hallward, Bongie and Nesbitt (1.3.1.). Whereas these critics have repeatedly charged even the 'early Glissant' with a disinterest in geopolitical struggles, his physical engagement at the frontline of one of the bloodiest wars of the 20th century could serve to contradict some of these claims and help to reposition him as a 'brother of Fanon' (CD 25).²⁷⁹

This impression is further heightened by the disproportional length at which Noudelmann proceeds to depict a short visit Glissant undertook in 1961 to Cuba, to which he dedicates an entire chapter (2018, 177-205). Glissant's journey to Cuba was preceded by the formation of the *Front des*

277 "For Édouard, it was a real act of marronage that allowed dominated Antilleans to reach clandestine territories of freedom", my translation.

278 The casualness with which Noudelmann describes this time of war as resembling 'a long holiday', give both reasons to doubt the factuality of his account as well as the characteristic of this political activism as marronage (2018, 170).

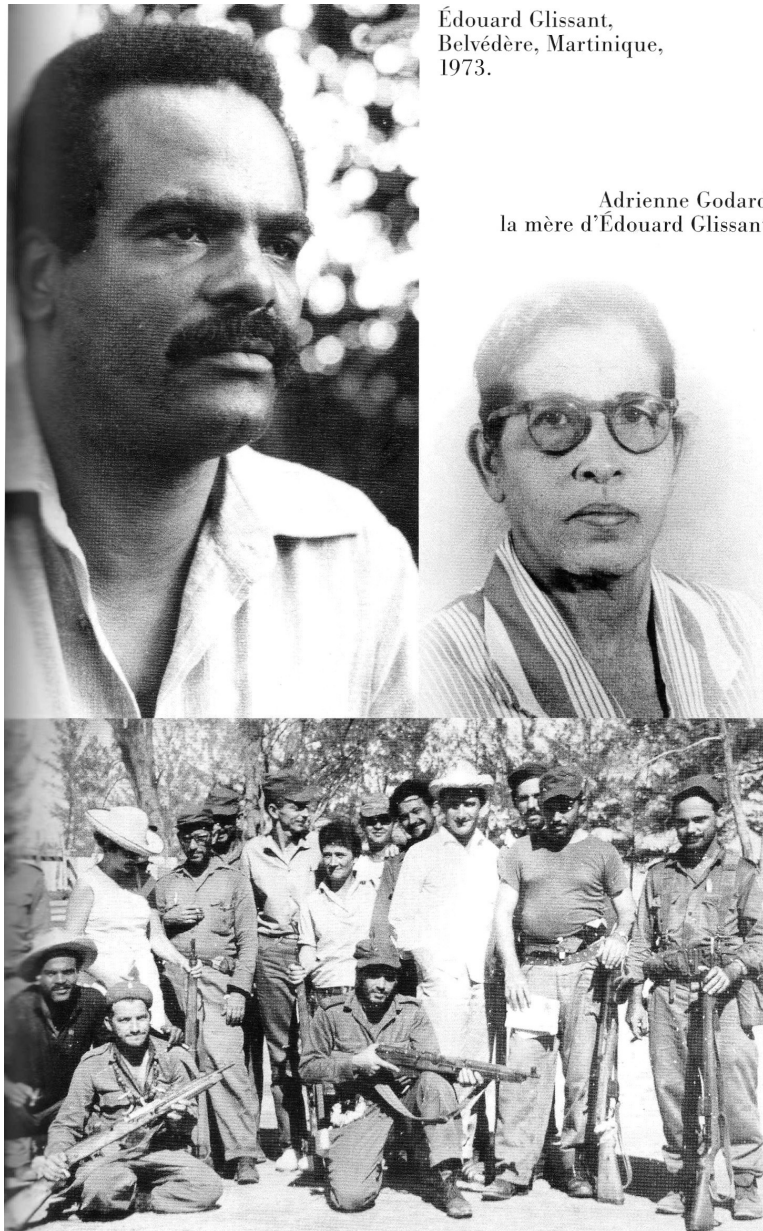
279 Glissant's signature under the *Déclaration sur le droit à l'insoumission dans la guerre d'Algérie*, known as the *Manifeste des 121*, had previously been the only indication for an engagement with the Algerian war on Glissant's part (Noudelmann 2018, 172).

Antillais et Guyanais pour l'Autonomie. Tasked by the leadership of the *Front Antillo-Guyanais* to learn about the Cuban revolutionary model and its applicability to Martinique, the success of the island's educational model (187), the advances made against structural racism (195), and the blending of politics and arts for revolutionary action (192) left a marked impression on Glissant according to Noudelmann. When Noudelmann singles out his experience of the Cuban landscape as the 'spark that ignited his maroon imaginary' ("*La chaîne de montagnes donne le sentiment d'entrer dans un nouveau pays où Édouard retrouve le monde des fugitifs qui déclenche son imaginaire du marronage*"²⁸⁰, 186), it remains unclear whether this is Noudelmann's own interpretation or refers back to a statement made by Glissant.

Against this background, the main point appears to prove that Glissant was *deeply involved* in the decolonial struggle and not merely an intellectual bystander. On a visual level, this depiction is confirmed with particular emphasis by an image included in Noudelmann's book that shows Glissant with a group of Cuban soldiers (Illustration 3). The picture shows Glissant squatting (bottom left corner), leisurely placing a hand on the shoulder of a soldier sitting in front of him, holding a machine gun. The image, which to my knowledge was made public for the first time in Noudelmann's book, is prominently placed on the very first page of an inlay containing four colour-pages at the centre of the book, right underneath a portrait of Glissant and one of his mother. Remarkable about this 'performance' of anti-imperial militancy in the life-writing practice of Noudelmann is not only the disproportional space it occupies in the biography, as a relatively brief episode that Glissant never publicly referenced in his own lifetime. The story of Glissant being personally exposed to the Cuban revolutionary model and inspired by it also provokes the imagination of *what would have been* if Martinique would have followed this path, rather than the one espoused by Césaire's politics of departmentalisation.

Shortly after Glissant's return to France, the *Front Antillo-Guyanais* was banned by the de Gaulle regime, and Glissant was confined to mainland France from 1961 to 1964. According to Glissant's own account (Couffon and Glissant 2001), and in Noudelmann's book, Glissant undertook several attempts to escape from mainland France during the time of his ban. Among them are an attempted trip to Lagos via Marseille on invitation by the *Société Africaine de Culture*, and once by boat to Guadeloupe. In each case he was allegedly arrested by the French police (2018, 198). Again, Glissant's attempts at defying the banning order and escape from France are framed by Noudelmann was further acts of refusal and disobedience in the tradition of marronage.

²⁸⁰"The mountain chain gives the feeling of entering a new country where Edouard finds the world of fugitives that ignites his imaginary of marronage", my translation.



Édouard Glissant,
Belvédère, Martinique,
1973.

Adrienne Godard,
la mère d'Édouard Glissant.

Illustration 3: Arrangement of images in François Noudelmann's book
Édouard Glissant – L'identité généreuse (2018, 225).

He, for example, writes in this vein that upon Glissant's realisation that a revolutionary overthrow of the neocolonial system in Martinique stood little chances of success, “*En alternative à la révolution interdite*” (As an alternative to the forbidden revolution) he turned to the writing of a novel, namely *Le quatrième siècle*, which, as outlined in 1.4.3. and 3.1. deals with the historic rivalry between slaves and maroons in Martinique (2018, 202). Noudelmann thus alludes to Glissant's *physical movements of marronage* having been translated or transformed into the realm of literature as the *imagination of a fictional marronage*, a triple transfer of Glissant relational political practice that is generally coherent with the findings concerning the politics of relation thus far.

With regards to the performativity of Glissant's 'struggle credentials', it has to be noted that Glissant employed these references rather sparingly. He neither placed a great emphasis on his

involvement in Algeria nor on his trip to Cuba. There are several instances in which Glissant even deliberately obscured these parts of his biography. In the filmed conversation that forms part of the *One World in Relation* documentary by Manthia Diawara, he for example referred to his interaction with Che Guevara as, “somebody very famous, whom I don't want to mention out of modesty but was an admirer of Fanon” (2011, 10).²⁸¹ While Glissant's 'modesty' here could also be interpreted as a form of mystifying his acquaintances in the decolonial struggle, especially when read in conjunction with Noudelmann's general account, it is clear that Glissant did not prioritise a self-stylisation as anti-colonial radical militant along the line of a Sartrean *écrivain engagé*, as much as he was invested in conjuring the image of a prophet figure (2.3.). Instead, the image from Cuba only gains in *political value* in response to the charge levelled against his critics. It supplements the image of the 'old prophet of creolisation' or 'Monsieur Tout-Monde' in Raphaël Confiant's condescending formulation (2019), with an image of a politically committed young intellectual who swiftly transitioned from the armed struggle to the writing of novels. This example therefore demonstrates the fact that the kind of life-writing forming part of Glissant's political archive is a collective practice that cannot be limited to Glissant's own statements and practices.

While both approaches to Glissant's marronage movements in his biography or through the lens of life-writing are of interest in terms of the myth created around his persona, the episodes described here are too short and distant for them to be convincing as constituting a more general practice of marronage into the world. Instead of only referring to a narrow selection of cases in which Glissant or others have referred to his movements as taking the form of a marronage, the following sub-section therefore suggests a study of his larger personal trajectory through the lens of marronage.

3.3.1. From the Island to the Archipelago – Towards the *Institut martiniquais d'études*

By re-tracing a movement of marronage in Glissant's life-writing practice, this sub-section engages with a set of overtly self-referential pronouncements in his essays and interviews as well as passages in his fictional oeuvre from which this trajectory can be inferred. The main point of reference with respect to his fictional oeuvre will be the fictional character Mathieu, who bears strong resemblance to Glissant according to several Glissant scholars. Their 'resemblance' can moreover be based on what Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith call the 'vital statistics' of the fictional subject, such as the year of birth, education, movement across space, and profession.

Like Glissant, Mathieu is born in Martinique in 1928, moves to France as a young man with

²⁸¹ According to Glissant Che Guevara told him that: “You people in the Lesser Antilles have very sharp minds, because you are the ones who are most threatened.” He meant, not physically threatened, but spiritually, intellectually, culturally. And it's true: a cultural threat can extinguish a community, but it can also activate its possibilities” (Glissant and Diawara 2011, 10).

the intention of becoming a writer by profession. Outside this biographical overlap, Glissant has also repeatedly obfuscated the boundary between fiction and non-fiction, by attributing certain of his books to Mathieu in the fictional realm, such as the essay book *Traité du Tout-Monde* (1997) in the novel *Tout-Monde* (1993). The main set of texts across which one can trace the trajectory of Mathieu are the novels *La Lézarde* (1958), *Le quatrième siècle* (1964), *La case du commandeur* (1981), *Mahagony* (1987), *Tout-monde* (1993) and *Ormerod* (2003). As with the case of Mycéa, Mathieu's trajectory in these novels is not narrated in a chronological or coherent fashion from one book to the next. Instead, parts of his life appear in anachronistic and dispersed fragments across Glissant's fictional texts. In my view, Mathieu's life-story is however not chaotic to such a degree that its fragments cannot be arranged, or puzzled together in such a way that a sense of a 'character profile' emerges. For the most part, this sub-section, thus consists of a *mise-en-relation* of Mathieu's fictional profile and itinerary with Glissant's own trajectory in order to discern possible political implications of Glissant's life-writing practice across the divisions of fiction, biography and abstract political thought.

The Descent from the Hills – Glissant's Mythical Story of Maroon Origin

In *La cohée du Lamentin* Glissant wrote about one of his first memories being carried on his mother back as she walked down from the hills, the mythical domain of the maroons, into the valleys of Martinique. The passage reads as follows:

*“Adrienne ma mère, peut-être considérée bien hardie d'avoir mis au monde un autre petit Nègre, me prit sous un bras et descendit la trace du Morne qui menait au bruit éternel de l'eau coulant là en bas. J'avais un peu plus d'un seul mois d'existence, et il faut douter si j'entendais ce bruissement qui sillonnait dans l'air et semblait arroser toutes choses. Pourtant je l'écoute encore en moi. L'intense végétation ne présentait pas une faille, pas une éclaircie, mais le soleil la perçait généralement avec une violence sans rage, je les vois encore, nuit bleue des branchages et de lames des feuilles et vivacité du jour”*²⁸² (LCDL 89).

Further on in the same narrative, Glissant equated his personal descent from the hills with that of the Antillean people more generally, writing:

*“Nous savons y déchiffrer par exemple l'histoire des Antillais: débarqués dans les maisons à esclaves puis repartis sur les Habitations, ils trouvaient refuge dans les hauteurs, avant peut-être de se tourner vers le delta: ainsi montaient-ils vers la source par un mouvement qui se donnait aux origines pour mieux désigner l'avenir”*²⁸³ (LCDC 91).

282“My mother Adrienne, to whom it must have been very daring to have given birth to another little black boy, took me under her arm and walked down the trail of the morne which led to the eternal noise of water flowing down there. I must have been just over a month old. One has to doubt whether I heard the rustling noise that crisscrossed the air and seemed to soak all things. Yet I still hear this sound inside myself. The intense vegetation was not a flaw, not a sunny spell, but the sun violently pierced through it with without rage, I still see it, blue night of branches and leaves, liveliness of the day”, my translation.

283“We, for example, know how to decipher the history of the Antilles: from the slave houses to the habitations, they found refuge in the hills before, perhaps, turning towards the delta: that is how they climbed towards the source in a movement towards origins to better foresee the future”, my translation.

Passages like these forcefully illustrate how Glissant modelled the account of his own life in a mythical way for it to represent the history of the Caribbean more generally. Reading the 'founding narrative' of Glissant's life as part of a mythical story that traces a more general movement in line with Glissant's overall philosophy and politics (a movement from the hills, to the valley, the city, and across the ocean into the Tout-Monde), traces a movement that not only transgresses the borders between different natural zones making up the Martinican landscape, but also the social borders separating the mountainous territory inhabited by the maroons, and the land of the plantation system inhabited by the land-owning *béké* and their former slaves, an interpretation that has also been advanced by Noudelmann (2018, 27). Associated with this direction, is also a shift from a life of isolation and self-sufficiency in the hills to an opening up to the complexities of the colonial society and those beyond the sea. While these memories of personal experiences, can be contested by others,²⁸⁴ this kind of reading suggests the conceptualisation of a different kind of marronage, one of a written and lived performance of a movement towards the world.

The Imperative of Escaping the Island – The Trajectories of Glissant, Mathieu and Thaël

Glissant's movement towards the world – which in a first instance is a flight away from the island – can also be detected when one traces the combined trajectories of Glissant's physical movements along with those of his male fictional protagonist Mathieu. In Glissant's autobiographical statements about his youth in Martinique, the desire to escape from the confines of the island was a fundamental experience. While the institutions of slavery were still in existence, such as the plantations on which Glissant grew up, and on which his father worked as one of the first black *gèreur*, or plantation overseer (Noudelmann 2018, 203), the immediate context of Glissant's youth was marked by a typically colonial setup, to which he referred in *Le discours antillais* as defined by a total project of assimilation geared towards producing a perpetual state of 'nothingness' for Martinicans (LDA 157). This is larger socio-political background against which his first novel, *La Lézarde* (1958) is set.

In the novel, a group of friends around the protagonists of Mathieu, Thaël and Mycéa work towards actively overturning the colonial oppression stifling the island. As pointed out by several scholars, this fictional group of activists was closely modelled on *Franc Jeu*, a group of young writers co-founded by Glissant during his adolescence and with which was actively involved in mobilising for the election campaign of Aimé Césaire as Mayor of Fort-de-France in 1946. At the onset of *La Lézarde* brought about through democratic means, such as conscientisation campaigns in rural areas, appears to be an actual possibility to be and mobilisation for the first democratic

²⁸⁴As Noudelmann points out, Glissant's own mother contradicted Glissant's version of their 'descent from the hills' (2018, 289).

elections on the island. Another option, which *La Lézarde* depicts as running parallel to the election campaign, is physical decolonial violence against individuals representing the colonial system. Both avenues of political action lead to an impasse in the content of the novel. After the electoral victory of 'one of their own' and the murder of the colonial officer Garin, the group of friends is disheartened when they realise that the local politicians they had helped to put in positions of power remained, de facto, dependent on the colonial metropole. At the end of *La Lézarde* this impasse, but also the pragmatic necessity of migrating to the colonial metropole in order to pursue tertiary education, leads to the dissolution of the group of activist-friends and their collective exodus to mainland France.

In *La Lézarde*, Mathieu is 21 years old and depicted as the intellectual leader of the group that organises the election campaign and plans to assassinate the colonial officer. Following the election victory that marks the dramatic peak of *La Lézarde*, Mathieu's focus turns away from the political arena. Instead of actively continuing the struggle for the decolonisation Mathieu sets out on a journey to France. As the leader of the group, a poet and a student of history inducted into the peculiar historiography of Papa Longoué (2.2.), he is also isolated from them, appearing 'like an ancestor'. Mathieu's fragility and indecisiveness, which take the form of an illness described as 'vertigo', is contrasted to the strength, decisiveness and raw force associated with Thaël who arrives in town from the hills and descends from a family of maroons. Throughout *La Lézarde*, their different strengths are repeatedly depicted as complementary. Whereas Mathieu develops the plan to assassinate Garin, Thaël is strong enough to carry it out. In the first scene of the book, when Thaël is depicted as walking down from the mountain and Mathieu approaches him from the town, he is said to appear 'from the extension of his hand' (LL 13). They both realise that they benefit from each other's influence and admire each other's actions. Apart from the statements attributed to them²⁸⁵ the intensity of their relationship is underlined by their shared romantic interests in Valérie and Mycéa.

In conceptual terms, the individual paths they have set out on are associated with the work of reflection and writing (Mathieu) and physical action (Thaël). This becomes apparent in formulations such as the following: “*Je ne veux pas décrire, je ne veux pas souffrir, je veux connaître et enseigner*”²⁸⁶ (Mathieu), “*Je veux vivre, savoir cette misère, la supporter, la combattre*”²⁸⁷ (Thaël) (LL 29). Despite these differences in 'political style', they are both depicted as being engaged in the same struggle, they both 'suffer from the same passion' (LL 29), alluding to the liberation struggle of the island. After a traumatic experience in which his girlfriend Valérie dies at

²⁸⁵ Mathieu: “*Je suis son frère. Je veux lui ressembler, comprends-tu?*” (I am his brother. I want to be like him. Do you understand?) (LL 107).

²⁸⁶ “I do want to dictate, I do not want to suffer, I want to learn and teach”, my translation.

²⁸⁷ “I want to live, I want to know this misery, withstand it and fight against it”, my translation.

the hands of the dogs protecting his house on the hills, Thaël is the first to leave the island in 1940. His decision is in part explained by the trauma of this experience (TM 147), but also due to the distance he feels from the poetic endeavours of Mathieu and the other members of the group around him (TM 146):

“quand Valérie avait dévalé ce morne, combien il s'était dégagé, une fois pour toutes, de cette poétique effervescence, de ses inspirations juvéniles, de cette recherche de beauté farouche, où Mathieu et les autres s'était complu et se retrouvaient. 'Je maronne, songeait-il, mais pas plus que pour les anciens marrons, ce n'est pas que je prends la fuite.’” (TM 147)²⁸⁸.

In terms of vital statistics (Smith and Watson), Glissant's own trajectory followed the itinerary of the fictional characters in *La Lézarde* when he moved from Martinique to Paris in 1946 to pursue his tertiary education. This move could be conceived as both a flight out of the political 'dead-end situation' he found on his island, as it was a move towards an engagement with other intellectuals from the Caribbean archipelago and Africa that met in the student milieu of post-war Paris. In Noudelmann's rendition of Glissant's experience of his first crossing of the Atlantic, the journey enhanced the ambivalent feelings he harboured for France.²⁸⁹

Black Paris in the 1950s – An Island for Militant Afro-Caribbean Intellectuals

When Glissant arrived in France in the early 1950s on a scholarship to further his education he was thus both a migrant crossing several thousand sea kilometres by ship, as well as a French citizen relocating from an Overseas Department to the centre of the French state. In the early 1950s, Paris became a meeting point for intellectuals from the French colonial empire as well as for black intellectuals from the US, turning the French metropole into a genuine hub of black transnationalism (Edwards 2003, Jules-Rosette 1998, Buatala 2008). This milieu allowed Glissant to meet other writers and intellectuals from Africa, the US and other Antillean islands in the circles created by the leaders of the Négritude movement, their publication *Présence Africaine* and the organisation *Société Africaine de Culture*. Due to the colonial matrix of power in place in the Caribbean it was paradoxically easier for these intellectuals to forge bonds of solidarity in Paris than in the Caribbean itself. Seen through the lens of marronage, the metropole thus appears as a cultural hinterland, which the size of the individual Antillean islands did not provide. In Paris, individual acts of *petit* intellectual marronage could transform into *collective* forms of resistance, of which the *Front des Antillais et Guyanais pour l'Autonomie* is one example among many.²⁹⁰ The

²⁸⁸“when Valerie slid down this morne, how he disengaged, once and for all, from this effervescent poetics, of their juvenile inspirations, of this search for fierce beauty, in which Mathieu and the others divulged and where they found themselves. 'I am marooning, he thought, but not any more like the ancient maroons, I am not running away’”, my translation.

²⁸⁹The discrepancy between the structural racism of everyday life in Paris and the legal equality, according to which Antilleans were officially equal French citizen, and the experience of being treated like a secondary citizen was, for example, made evident in the travel arrangements on the ship, where inhabitants of France's Overseas Departments had to travel under harsh conditions in the hold of the ship, while the more comfortable cabins being reserved for French nationals from France (2018, 82).

²⁹⁰As Yarimar Bonilla points out, the *Front des Antillais et Guyanais pour l'Autonomie* formed part of a larger array of nationalist organisations across the Antilles and the Diaspora, among them several militant student associations, the *Organisation de la*

abstract movement, from the island to the archipelago via the metropole, is thus performed both by Glissant's fictional characters Mathieu and Thaël, as well as by the author himself.

The parts of Glissant's life-writing referring to his initial experience in Paris can be found across several essays (SLDC), interviews (EBR, Couffon and Glissant 2001) as well as his fictional work. In the novel *Tout-Monde*, for example, Mathieu arrives in Rue Blondel 4, a house offering cheap accommodation for students from the Antilles. In Glissant's autobiographic statements, he has also referred to the same house as accommodating immigrants from the Caribbean at the time. In his fictional references, he referred to them as the 'true salt of the world's diversity' and as navigating 'two impossibles' (TM 324), referring to a feeling of homelessness directed both towards the metropole as well as their respective places of origins which were still under colonial or neo-colonial rule at the time. The debates taking place in Afro-Caribbean circles centred around the political struggles of liberation. In this context, the fictional character Mathieu occupies an ambivalent position in that his main ambition is to forge a literary career for himself. His studies at the university are said to merely serve as a pretext for these ambitions (TM 67). Glissant has spoken about his experience in the student milieu of the Sorbonne University in similar terms. Among the poets, writers and activist from French colonies he perceived himself to occupy an in-between position, which was in part characteristic of Martinicans more generally.

In his rendition of Glissant's early years in Paris, Buata B. Malela also detects traces of an in-between or *entre-deux*-strategy in Glissant's social position. In Malela's account, Glissant neither actively participated in the white Parisian literary scene nor the Négritude milieu around the publication *Présence Africaine* (2008, 323). In Malela's reading, Glissant had to choose between either pledging fidelity to Césaire who dominated the Afro-Antillean world in Paris, and risk staying in his shadow, or break ties with him and risk isolation (324). Glissant's strategy was to distance himself from both worlds without rejecting either of the two, therefore practicing what Malela calls an "oblique continuation" (324). In the interview with Philippe Artières, Glissant described his experience in the following terms:

*"pour ma part ai je toujours travaillé avec mes compatriotes antillais tout en ayant d'autres activités auxquelles ils ne participaient pas, comme mon travail avec des amis poètes français de ma génération [...], dont les Antillais ne connaissent même pas le nom, et réciproquement. J'ai finalement été assez schizophrène dans ma vie : passionné de poésie à la française et passionné de poésie à l'antillaise, de gens qui n'écrivaient pas de poèmes mais défendaient le paysage, la mémoire historique, le langage"*²⁹¹ (2003, 5).

jeunesse anticolonialiste de la Martinique (OJAM), and *Groupe d'organisation nationale de la Guadeloupe* (GONG).

291 "For my part, I have always worked with my Antillean compatriots while pursuing other activities they did not participate in, like the work with my French friends, poets of my generation [...] whose names the Antilleans didn't even know, and vice versa. I've ended up being quite schizophrenic in my life: passionate about French poetry and passionate about Antillean poetry, of people who didn't write poems at all but defended their landscape, their historic memory, their own language", my translation.

The in-betweenness of Glissant's general approach, his ability to synthesise the two seemingly opposed areas of poetry and politics, was noted from the earliest critical reception of his work (see 1.3.1.). In a particularly explicit fictional rendition of the social and philosophical tension which Glissant mentioned in the above quote, Mathieu enters into a debate with Thaël, taking place in the Rue Blondel in the 1950s. While Mathieu makes a case for the importance of the concept of the rhizome, imaginary *lieux-communs* (common-places) and the importance of cultural relativity (TM 69), Thaël keeps insisting on the importance of the fundamental geopolitical divisions structuring the world – coloniser and colonised, north and south, black and white – and the violence that ensues from them (TM 68): Whereas Mathieu insists: “*Nous n'avons pas de maitre, au moins savent-ils cela,*”, Thaël responds: “*An-han! Cria Thaël. Oué! Hein? Et l'Indochine? Et l'Algerie? Et l'Angola? Et l'Afrique du Sud?*”²⁹² (TM 68). At a later point, Thaël continues with a monologue, turning around their different modes of action, writing or acting, and the question as to which one of them is more appropriate in the Tout-Monde. The time and place of the interaction is unclear, evoking the impression that it takes place in a timeless vacuum, never to be permanently settled. Provoking his friend Thaël asks: “*Mathieu Béluse [...] voyons si nous somme des frères, et si vous repondez aux questions?*” (TM 162), “*Ce qu'on agit ne raconte-t-il pas tout autant que ce qu'on parle ou que ce qu'on écrit? Et comme il y aura eu deux voyages, tout de meme il y'aura deux manières de raconter*”²⁹³ (TM 164). The question, directly addressing what is at stake in Glissant's practice of life-writing, as well as his politics more generally, remains an open one. The tension between the poet and the *homme d'action* is not have to be resolved. While it remains unclear, whether the character of Thaël was modelled on any specific historic personality, the resemblances between Thaël's trajectory and the life of Frantz Fanon are suggestive. As Glissant wrote in *Le discours antillais*:

“It is difficult for a French Caribbean individual to be the brother, the friend, or quite simply the associate or fellow countryman of Fanon. Because of all the French Caribbean intellectuals, he is the only one to have acted on his ideas, through his involvement in the Algerian struggle; this was so even if, after tragic and conclusive episodes of what one can rightly call his Algerian agony, the Martinican problem [...] retains its complete ambiguity” (CD 25).

Bearing in mind the non-biologic brotherhood between Mathieu and Thaël in *La Lézarde* and their philosophic debate in *Tout-Monde*, a case could be made that whereas Glissant can more readily be associated with the poetic vocation of Mathieu, Thaël's commitment to 'act on his ideas' is more closely modelled on with Fanon's philosophy of decolonisation. Further on in *Tout-Monde*,

292 “We don't have any masters, at least that's what they know”, “So so! shouted Thaël. Yeah. Really? And Indochina? And Algeria? And Angola? And South Africa?”, my translation.

293 “Mathieu Béluse, [...] let's see if we are brothers and if you can respond to these questions?”, “Does what one does not tell as much as what one writes? And just like there will be two journey, there will necessarily be two different ways of speaking about them“, my translation.

the debate between Mathieu (the poet) and Thaël (the '*homme d'action*'), is taken up, a third time, this time on a train between Le Havre and Paris:

“*Ainsi donc, dit Thaël, vous croyez que la poésie nous sauvera? Qu'est-ce que c'est pour vous?*”

- *D'abord, elle ne nous sauvera pas, dit le poète, ce n'est pas son rôle.*

- *Et qu'est-ce que c'est?*

- *Ensuite, c'est dévoiler ce qu'on ne voit pas, prévoir cela que la plupart ne cherchent pas, fouiller le paysage qui est autour, accorder ensemble des rythmes qui ne se sont jamais connus, comme de la mesure de la voix dans la démesure du tambour*²⁹⁴ (TM 180-81).

Since the debate between the two positions is open-ended, this fictional confrontation between 'brothers' makes the case that both 'modes' of being in relation with the Tout-Monde are equally valid. The main difference between Thaël and Mathieu, and here the resemblances with Fanon and Glissant ends, is that the traces of the actions of the former will remain largely invisible, and the latter are permanently recorded in writing. The privileging of acting a philosophy of relation over its formulation in writing also reasserts the kind of politics practiced by Mycéa, whose poetics does not require the act of transcription. As a way of rendering these kinds of political practices visible, an unspecified narrator in *Tout-Monde* remarks that Mathieu pledges to record the traces left by Thaël, who repeatedly says: “*Je me suis battu contre le monde. [...] Oui, je suis affecté par ce monde*”²⁹⁵ (TM 331), an expression that underlines the impression that, what draws Thaël's journey together to Mathieu's is the (whole-)world as their shared point of reference – a shared concern that could, in the view espoused by this thesis, also be applied to the work of Fanon and Glissant. As if to emphasise his commitment to action, Thaël's marronage into the Tout-Monde eventually takes the paradoxical form of an engagement for the French military in Indochina and Algeria, while Mathieu's character, on the other hand, ends up returning to Martinique as a successful writer in *Tout-Monde* and *Mahagony*.

Glissant's Return to Martinique in the 1970s – Reconciling Retour and Detour?

In Noudelmann's biography, Glissant's decision to return to Martinique in the 1964 was both a result of the lifted travel ban that was imposed on him by the de Gaulle government, as well as, what Glissant perceived to be a rejection of the French intellectual elite, and a desire to physically engage with the location that remained central to his fictional and political work, thus reconciling the movements of *detour* and *retour* which he theorised in *Le discours antillais* (1981) and *Poétique de la Relation* (1990). In *Le discours antillais*, the categorisation of the two modes of resistance was formulated against the background of the mode of domination experienced by a 'transferred people' (CD 14). From the impulse to literally return to Africa among the formerly

²⁹⁴“First of all it won't save us, [...] that's not it's role [...] And then it is to show what cannot be seen, to foresee that which most people don't look for, to go through the landscape that surrounds us, to collect the rhythms that aren't always known, like the tempo (*mésure*) of the voice and the *démésure* of the drum”, my translation.

²⁹⁵“I fought against the world”, “Yes I am affected by this world”, my translation.

enslaved, Glissant abstracted a more general strategy of resistance which he defined as an “obsession with a single origin: one must not alter the absolute state of being” (CD 16). Without categorically dismissing the impulse to return to the land of origin, Glissant insisted on the need of coming to terms with the new land, as the prerequisite of 'becoming a people' (CD 17). Detour, which Michael J. Dash translates as 'diversion', on the other hand, was associated with notions of camouflage and trickery, “formed like a habit, from an interweaving of negative forces that go unchallenged” (CD 19). Referring back to the context of colonial domination, it is defined as “the ultimate resort of a population whose domination by an Other is concealed” (CD 20). Contrasting these two main trajectories which he detected among Caribbean intellectuals, Glissant proceeded to group the work of key figures in the transnational black movement as performing either of the two moves. Marcus Garvey and the Négritude movement for him both fall for him into the tradition concerned with a return to single (African) origins, whereas the movement of Fanon was “The most important example of the effect of diversion [...] A grand and intoxicating diversion” for Glissant (CD 25). Read in conjunction with his depiction of the fictional character Thaël, who ends up aimlessly erring through the whole-world fighting the wars of others (Indochina, Algeria), following the impasse he had to confront in Martinique in the novel *Tout-Monde*, illustrates the psychological dimension of *detour* as a kind of 'substitute act' that essentially avoids confronting the actual problem at hand. As Glissant acknowledged, this kind of political practice is not altogether unproductive because it confronts the issue that remains elusive at home somewhere else.

In *Poétique de la Relation* Glissant relativised the negative connotation he attached to *detour* by referring to it as a kind of errantry that is opposed to the idea of single roots and mainly dedicated to 'knowing the world's totality' because “*dans la Poétique de la Relation, l'errant [...] cherche à connaître la totalité du monde et sait déjà qu'il ne l'accomplira jamais – et qu'en cela réside la beauté menacé du monde*”²⁹⁶ (PR 32). Glissant's argument vis-à-vis these two political traditions is the aforementioned call to reconcile the impulse to return with the trickery of *detour* towards a 'profound reconnection with ourselves' (CD 26) and towards “the necessary return to the point where our problems lay in wait for us”, which is also a return to “the point from which we started: the point of entanglement is where the forces of creolization must be put to work” (CD 25). The generalising ambition behind Glissant's conceptualisations of *retour* and *detour*, and the concrete geographic dimensions associated with these concepts, is further emphasised in the 'Table of the Diaspora' at the end of *Le discours antillais* on which the movements of these intellectuals and cultural moments like Jazz or Négritude are traced on a map linking the Americas, the Caribbean and Africa (Illustration 4).

²⁹⁶“In the Poetics of Relation the errant [...] tries to know the world's totality and already knows that he will never achieve it – and it is in this knowledge that the threatened beauty of the world resides”, my translation.

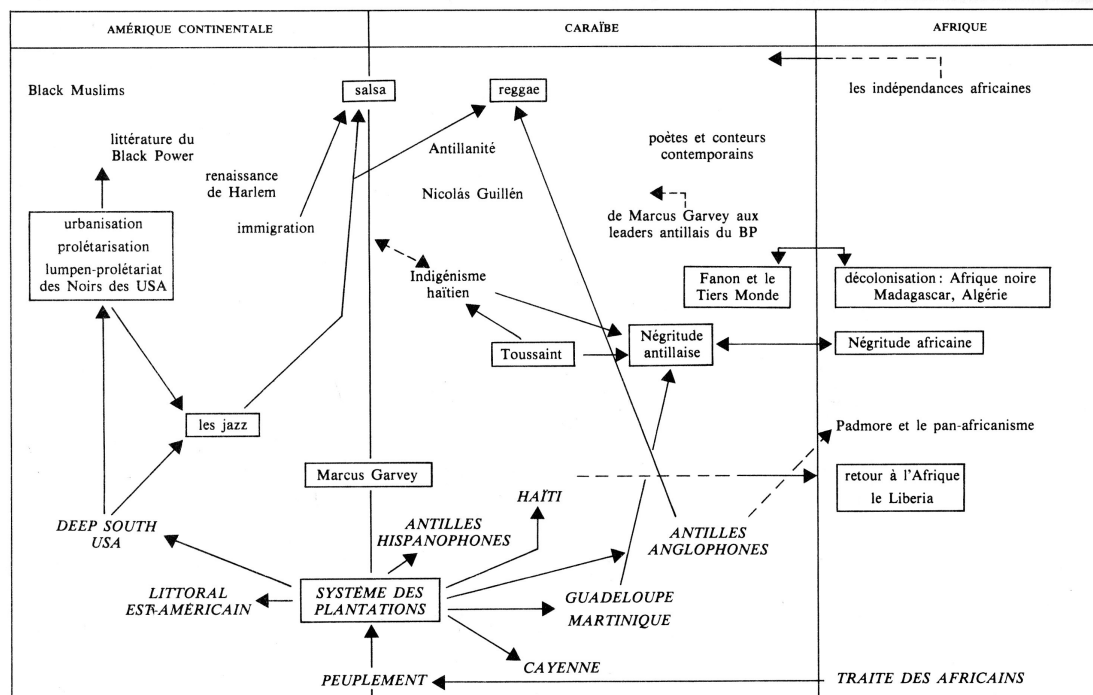


Illustration 4: Glissant's 'Map of the Diaspora' at the end of *Le discours antillais* (LDA 467).

Although *detour* and *retour* were primarily presented as abstract philosophical concepts by Glissant, his map also reveals that he, additionally, also considered the physical movements enacted by several proponents of these intellectual currents to be important. Seen through this lens, Glissant's personal trajectory gains in political importance. Tracing his movements from Martinique to France and back to Martinique, as I have done in this sub-section, it could be cast as an individual embodiment of the reconciliation of *detour* and *retour* – unlike Césaire who had effectively stayed in Martinique, and unlike Fanon who had moved to Africa. In Noudelmann's words: “For him writing about the independence of the Antilles from a distance is not enough, one actually has to live there, work towards change on the ground”²⁹⁷ (2018, 215). Similar to the shift in focalisation produced from *Le quatrième siècle* to *Ormerod*, his return to Martinique also signified, the movement from the island to the archipelago.

The political climate of the 1960s and 1970s was shaped by concerted attempts by several Caribbean intellectuals to foster a Pan-Caribbean unity in the institutional form of a West Indian Federation, a project that failed due to the diverging national interests of several Caribbean states, as well as the interests of former colonial powers to keep the islands under their respective spheres of influence. Realising that the political route towards a regional federation was blocked, Glissant along with a generation of Caribbean intellectuals focussed more strongly on fostering Pan-Caribbean bonds through the cultural realm (also see 4.1.2.). As he wrote towards the end of *Le*

²⁹⁷“Il ne lui suffi plus d'écrire, de loin, sur l'indépendance des Antilles, il faut désormais y habiter, travailler au changement sur place”, my translation.

discours antillais:

“This dream [of a Caribbean community] is still absurd on the political level. We know that the first attempt at a federation, in the anglophone islands, was quickly abandoned. The conflict of interest between Jamaica and Trinidad, their refusal to 'bear the weight' of the small islands caused this idealistic project to fail. What has been left behind a serious aversion on f the anglophone Caribbean to any such idea. This federation has been agreed to by the political establishment and not felt in a vital way, not dictated by the people. It would be silly to try to unite under some kind of legislation states whose political regimes, social structures, economic potential are today so varied if not opposed to each other [...] The dream is kept alive in a limited way in the cultural sphere” (CD 222-23).

Among Glissant's publications, *Le discours antillais* is the most obvious response and actual contribution to this project. The Caribbean festival of arts CARIFESTA '76 and '79, to which he dedicated a chapter in *Le discours antillais*, were of particular significance for him in that context (LDA 135). Again, the advocacy of Caribbean unity, could be framed as an intellectual marronage taking place on a small scale, but one that was geared towards pulling a larger community along. To make this argument, more concrete, one could refer to the fact that the particularity of *Le discours antillais* was that it that can be seen as containing the results of a decade of organisational action and collective research in the framework of the *Institute martiniquais d'études*, established by Glissant in 1969. In the following, I will demonstrate how the work around this educational institution can be considered as performing the worldly movement from the island to the archipelago in a way that translates abstract political discourse into a concrete organisational form.

The *Institute martiniquais d'étude* as a Movement Towards the Archipelago

Upon his return, Glissant had recognised that neither a guerilla fight, the founding of a political party, or economic strikes would be feasible options for the decolonisation of Martinique. The reasons for these impossibilities are outlined in *Le discours antillais* and have been mentioned before: Martinique is too small to have a hinterland where an army could operate, Césaire's politics of departmentalisation was too popular for there to be a realistic chance of success for an opposition party, Martinique did not have an economy worth boycotting since collapse of the plantation system, and the prestige and strategic location of Martinique was too important for France to let go of its Overseas Department. For Glissant, the outcome of these considerations was that what is usually referred to as 'cultural-political' action remained the only viable option to bring about transformation on his native island. His work to establish the *Institute martiniquais d'études* (IME) as a space for critical studies *by Martinicans and Caribbeans about Martinique and the Caribbean*, has to be studied against this historical and conceptual background. Whereas Glissant did not extensively write or speak about this organisational aspect of his political practice, one can find elaborate depictions of his work at the IME both in Noudelmann's biography as well as in the

testimonies of some of the students who attended the IME in the 1970s. Beatrice Stith Clark and Juliette Éloi-Blézès have, for example, shared their experiences as students at the IME in oral and written accounts.^{298 299}

These accounts support my reading Glissant's work around the IME as a cultural action geared towards transforming the minds of a new generation of Martinicans to counter what Glissant viewed as a dangerous state of psychological alienation (Noudelmann 2018, 219). In concrete terms, this meant that this private educational institution – which was initially geared towards providing students who struggled academically in the French school system with an alternative educational route (221) –, focussed on teaching aspects that fell outside the French school curriculum, such as the history of the slave trade and the plantation system (220). According to Noudelmann, Glissant modelled the school loosely along the Cuban revolutionary schools, which he had visited in 1961 (220). In this tradition, the role of education is not limited to the instruction of a set curriculum, but is more holistic in the sense that it involves the physical space in which it takes place, the time structure and the role of the participants, with the goal of creating what Noudelmann calls an 'equilibrium of bodies, the balancing of personalities' (220). Putting the Pan-Caribbean convictions of Glissant into practice, the staff at the IME was mainly made up of colleagues from neighbouring islands and from South America. In terms of the curriculum this meant that it proposed an interdisciplinary teaching of the arts, the sciences, the sports, languages and philosophies. The presence of art works by Victor Anicet and Roberto Matta throughout the building moreover turned the IME into an experimental gallery in Noudelmann's account (223-24).

Against the view that Glissant's educational engagement should be seen as separate from his written oeuvre, Noudelmann insists that it should be considered a piece of work like his poems or novels “*une création vivante et collective*“ (a collective and living creation) (220). This perspective complies with the one espoused throughout this thesis. Another important influence on the institutional set-up of the IME are the student uprising of 1968, which forced educational institutions in France to become less hierarchical and more socially inclusive, a characteristic that shaped the IME in Éloi-Blézès' perception even before this historic moment. As she recounts, the unorthodox teaching style of Glissant and his colleagues gave rise to rumours on Martinique that there was a 'small cultural revolution going on'. In Noudelmann's account, the relative success of the IME eventually attracted both the negative attention from the adherents to Césaire's administration, who effectively ignored the project and did not provide it with any financial support. On the other end of the political spectrum the IME was also critiqued by staunch '*indépendentists*',

298References to Éloi-Blézès's account of the IME refer to an interview with Sylvie Glissant on the website of the ITM (2018).

299Among the first published accounts of scholarly work at the IME is Beatrice Stith Clark's article *IME Revisited: Lectures by Edouard Glissant on Sociocultural Realities in the Francophone Antilles* (1989).

to whom the IME was to accommodating and not distant enough from Césaire's administration (220).

In an effort of extending the IME's reach outside the teachers and students of the school, the discussions among Glissant and his colleagues informed the launching of cultural journal named *ACOMA*. The title of the magazine refers to a tall tree on the island that is said to remain as alive after it is cut as when it was first planted.³⁰⁰ The slogan, which was printed on the cover of each of the journals, alludes to the unbroken energy of the struggle for liberation from French domination and its transformation from overt militant struggle at the moment of decolonisation to more covert actions intervening in a longer time-frame. Even if this struggle has been aborted on an official political level, it is alive in the less conventional political spheres of cultural work, in the underground so to speak. From 1971 to 1973, five editions of the *ACOMA* journal were published. In line with Glissant's project of bringing the forgotten historic and cultural entanglements of the Antillean back, as a 'cure' against the trauma brought about by the initial uprootment caused by the slave trade (chapter 2), the editorial line of *ACOMA* was formulated in the inaugural issue as a “*science de nous-mêmes, prescience de ce qui ne pourra être accompli que par nos peuples, et non pas décidé par des états-majors d'intellectuels*”³⁰¹ (*ACOMA* 1, 4).

In terms of its 'worldly' direction, which forms the main line of interest of this chapter, the main proposition made by the *ACOMA* journal is formulated in the editorial in the following terms as: “*Les Antilles, les Amériques. S'ouvrir à cette réalité*” (The Antillean, the Americas. To open oneself to this reality) (*ACOMA* 1, 5). The decision to begin the first issue of *ACOMA* with a 'Letter from Fort-de-France' by James Forman is instructive in that regard. Forman, who was a leading figure for the Black Panther movement in the US at the time, had come to Martinique to interview the mother of Frantz Fanon and took his visit as an opportunity to reflect on the status quo of a transnational black struggle for liberation. Written in Fort-de-France in 1961, Forman's letter effectively creates a map of black struggles world-wide by citing figures like Patrice Lumumba, Che Guevara, Herbert Lee, Sékou Touré and Julius Nyerere and countries like South Africa, Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Guinea, Tanzania, Congo Brazzaville in which “Western imperialists are raping and plundering, robbing and destroying, choking and suffocating, exploiting and oppressing, mining its riches and stealing its profits, bribing its leaders and starving its children” (*ACOMA* 1, 14). In the letter, which was published in English and French versions alongside each other, Forman also extended the Caribbean archipelago to include the US-South, in

300The full slogan reads: “*L'acoma franc est un des plus gros et des plus hauts arbres du pays ... On remarque que fort longtemps après être coupé, le coeur en est aussi sain, humide et plein de sève, que si on le venait de mettre par terre*” (The acoma is one of the biggest and tallest trees of the country... One notices that very long after being cut, its heart is as healthy, moist and full of sap as if it had just been planted into the ground).

301“a science of ourselves, a foresight of what can be accomplished by our people, and not decided upon by the intellectual generals”, my translation.

ways reminiscent of Glissant's positioning of Faulkner as a Caribbean writer (FM). In the imaginary archipelago of shared feelings, sights and smells evoked by Foreman,³⁰² the ideological boundaries between socialism, Pan-Africanism and Third Worldism give way to a more general sense of solidarity in the fight against racism, colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism (ACOMA 1, 30).

With regards to the medium of a journal in the larger struggle to which the IME was devoted, the first editorial notes that it might not be the best suited for the Martinican situation because of its inability to reach a larger audience: “*Une revue ne peut servir qu'a supposer des lignes de force, préparer par un travail en profondeur l'élucidation des perspectives, et toute affection d'action', est ici un leurre supplémentaire ajouté à l'aliénation organisationnelle générale*”³⁰³ (ACOMA 1, 4). Aware of the elitist nature of the enterprise, Glissant made the case to counter-balance the social distance between intellectual work with a deliberate engagement with the Martinican people. The IME's travelling theatre group deserves particular attention in this context. The 'nomadic street theatre group', which Glissant established at the IME travelled across Martinique and the Caribbean to put his conception of a shared 'Caribbean heritage' on stage, performing on public spaces like squares and fruit markets (Noudelmann 2018, 224-25). The theatre group also staged plays as part of an annual cultural festival housed by the IME. On an abstract level, the importance Glissant accorded to the theatre as a medium can be deduced from his arguments in a contribution called *Theatre, Conscience du Peuple* (ACOMA 1, 41-60), an article that also forms the basis of a chapter dedicated to the same issue in *Le discours antillais*.

Arguing categorically that “*Il n'y a pas de nation sans théâtre*” and “*Il n'y a pas de théâtre sans nation*” (There is no nation without theatre; There is no theatre without a nation) (ACOMA 2, 42), Glissant outlined the necessity of moving away from a folkloric depiction of Martinican culture, such as carnivals, which he perceived as a direct outcome of the deep-seated cultural alienation of a people that has been forced to believe that it has no history. Against the representation of false clichés reproduced for the consumption of a white 'other', Glissant saw the theatre as a tool to create an actual interaction between the social elite and the masses, as a popular art with the capacity to affect change: “*un art capable par son insertion de changer le réel: de contribuer à la reprise historique. Cet art ne peut être le fait que des Martiniquais eux-mêmes, engagés dans un processus propre*”³⁰⁴ (ACOMA 2, 57).

As a particularly instructive example of how Glissant combined his abstract

302 “as Mrs Fanon speaks of her son, Frantz Fanon, a ray of delicious experience enters my being like the coolness of rain on a hot tropical day, reminding me of how my grandmother in the heat of a Mississippi day would tickle her toes under the flow of the same cool rain” (ACOMA 1, 18).

303 “A revue cannot do more than suggest lines of force, to prepare a thorough work of elucidation of perspective, and any affection towards 'action' is here nothing but a supplementary illusion that is added to the general organisational alienation”, my translation.

304 “an art that is capable to change reality: to contribute to the taking back of history. This art can only be made by Martinicans themselves, involved in an internal process”, my translation.

conceptualisation of the role of theatre in nation-building, and his organisational action in the IME, one could cite the performance of Glissant's theatre play *Monsieur Toussaint* (1961) by the IME theatre group at CARIFESTA '76. In the 1970s, CARIFESTA became one of the few cultural events that enabled exchanges across the divisions of Francophone, Anglophone and Hispanic and Creole cultural scenes, in the tradition of the major black cultural festivals organised in Dakar 1966, Algiers 1969 and Lagos 1976. As Noudelmann remarks about these events: “the Carifestas embody an archipelagic spirit linking the Caribbean islands to one another and rescue them from their linguistic and political isolations. They draw the horizontal relation without a central dominant force which Edouard used as a model for the rest of the world”³⁰⁵ (2018, 243). In terms of the formal versatility of the politics of relation, the practice of staging a theatre play in this context not only combines Glissant's *fictional* rendition of the trajectory of a *historical maroon* figure of Toussaint Louverture as a hero that people from across the Caribbean could identify with along the lines of the founding myth discussed in the previous chapter (2.0.). The choice for the genre of the theatre is also a direct expression of Glissant's *abstract political argument* for the role of theatre as providing a potential foundation for a new community. The fact that the play was performed by members of an institution he had created himself, and was staged at a cultural festival to which he had lent significant organisational support (243), add another *organisational dimension* to the concrete performance of a flight into the archipelago, away from the isolation of the island. The multilayeredness of this political practice is significant in that its different dimensions – writing a play, creating an institution that performs the play at a cultural festival –, are designed to *re-enforce its impact*.

Glissant remained the director of the IME for 14 years. Despite the relative success of the IME, Noudelmann attributes Glissant's eventual turn away from it to a lagging recognition of his work in Martinique, where it did not receive the same acknowledgement as Césaire. As pointed out above, the Césaire administration also did not provide the IME with the required funding for the IME to expand some of the research projects, which contributed to an increased sense of isolation on Glissant's part. Upon handing in *Le discours antillais*, the result of more than a decade of intense collective debate and research, as a PhD thesis to the Sorbonne University in Paris, Glissant returned to Paris, where the deaths of Sartre in 1980 and the electoral victory of François Mitterrand 1981 signalled, in his view, the beginning of a new era for 'literary politics' as well as for the 'politics of politicians'.

³⁰⁵“les Carifestas incarnent l'esprit d'archipel qui relie les îles de la Caraïbe et les sort de leurs isolement linguistiques et politiques. Elles dessinent cette relation horizontale où ne prévaut pas une centralité dominante et dont Édouard fait un modèle pour le reste du monde”, my translation.

3.3.2. From the Archipelago to the Whole-World – Towards the *Institut du Tout-Monde*

The direction from the archipelago to the world, which this sub-section traces as a way of continuing on the line of study pursued above, should not be read as one-directional. Even though the decision of turning away from direct political confrontations in Martinique or the Caribbean region that did not stand a realistic chance of success – as demonstrated by the IME's marginalisation, or the collapse of the political project of a Caribbean federation – is noteworthy as a practice in which a move away, or out of a particular political cul-de-sac, was a preferred option for Glissant's politics of relation, this does not imply that these political struggles, and the geographic scales on which they were fought, were abandoned once and for all. More often than not, Glissant returned to the site of struggle and worked to affect changes through discursive or institutional interventions once the general context was deemed more conducive, as illustrated by the *Manifeste pour un projet global* discussed above (3.2.3.).

Following the line of enquiry presented in the previous sub-section, I will now turn to an outline of how Glissant's personal movements, can be seen as tracing a line of flight into the world when analysed through the lens of an intellectual marronage. In a second step, I will frame Glissant's organisational work around the setting up of the *Institut du Tout-Monde* as the outcome or concretisation of a trajectory traced in his work of fictional, life-writing and abstract thought.

Travels Into the Whole World – Glissant's Practice of Ethno-Tourism

Glissant's physical displacements, which I have referred to as taking on the form of a zig-zagging across the Atlantic, between Martinique, Paris and the US from the 2000s onwards, can be juxtaposed with a more erratic or occasional practice of shorter travels during this time-frame. This pronounced interest in travelling the world emphasises an aspect about Glissant's political practice that might seem trivial, but that is nevertheless distinct from the practice of philosophers with a pronounced *disinterest* in travelling, of which Immanuel Kant's sedentariness in Königsberg serves as the most frequently cited example. In *Poétique de la Relation*, Glissant made the point that the kind of nomadism practiced by tourists, in the purest sense of the term, can be conceptually opposed to the violence performed by an 'arrowlike nomadism', which he associated with the notions of discovery and conquest. Describing this opposition he wrote: “The ontological obsession with knowledge gives way here to the enjoyment of a relation; in its elementary and often caricatural form this is tourism. Those who stay behind thrill to this passion for the world shared by all“ (PR 19). Framing Glissant's travels as a kind of Tout-Monde tourism, as I suggest in the following, therefore does not imply that Glissant harboured the ambition to 'cover' the whole-world in a gesture of conquering. Instead, his ambition appears more directly linked to an anthropological

practice interested in collecting a few samples of cultural differences that, in their totality, make up the *Tout-Monde*.

As Noudelmann notes, Glissant took up every opportunity to travel as early as the 1950s, as a way of broadening his personal horizon and to physically visit the places that were of importance to him through his readings of literature and philosophy. In contrast to his movements between France, the US and Martinique which were the result of financial arrangements or circumstance, and his more explicitly politically motivated stays in Cuba and at Moroccan-Algerian border at the onset of the 1960s, these shorter trips were for the most part financed by academic or literary conferences. During these travels he got to visit places such as Ibadan (Nigeria), Dakar (Senegal), Durban (South Africa), or Vernezza in Italy. The manner in which these travels informed his fictional oeuvre cannot be discerned with any certainty. It is only through Noudelmann's recollection of Glissant's travel itinerary that it becomes possible to attribute a set of personal experiences to some of the passages in his novels and essay books, and to identify these passages as 'self-referential' in Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's sense.

Several passages in *Tout-Monde*, for example, recount episodes of Mathieu's student days as times of adventure and leisure. These anecdotes appear as surprisingly nostalgic memories of post Second World War youth in Europe and as illustrations of the role an 'innocent' kind of tourism could possibly play as a lived form of relation. In the novel, Mathieu travels to Italy during the semester break with a group of friends who all share artistic ambitions (TM 37). The friends stay in places that friends organise for them (TM 289) and work on fruit plantations, spending their time writing poetry, meditating and talking (TM 299) – at a time “*loin avant que le trouble des peuples lève et se publie, sur la face éclairée de la terre: on y pouvait à loisir apprécier des nuances futiles ou plaisantes chez les gens qu'on rencontrait*”³⁰⁶ (TM 294).

In *Tout-Monde* in particular, these travel memories at first appear as simply nostalgic reminiscences that are relatively arbitrarily included into the narrative. Often-times they are not directly attributed to any particular fictional character at all, and, if they are, they remain abstract to a degree that their personalities or specific character traits can not be discerned. Without any other available framework to make sense of the collection of anecdotes about different places in the world, the only bracket holding them together is that they are included in the same book, carrying the title *Tout-Monde*. In line with the 'gappiness' of Glissant's fictional writing (see preface) it is therefore left up to the reader to connect these distinct peoples and places. Emerging from this kind of exercise is a map of the *Tout-Monde*, traced by Glissant's fictionalised personal experiences. In Noudelmann's account of Glissant's practice of keeping travel diaries, he points out that he placed a

³⁰⁶“long before the suffering of the people was made public to the light side of the earth: one could freely appreciate the futile or pleasant nuances among the people one met”, my translation.

particular focus on the general impressions of the landscape and the people he encountered left on him, as well as on more anthropological observations. In several of his writings, these observations have, for example, been translated into attempts to ascertain in how far particular nation-states measure up against the standard of a creole community. The generalisations he drew from brief visits or distant knowledge, such as his belief in the success of Brazil as a successful model of creolisation, or in South Africa's constitution as endorsing a project 'unity in diversity', or Japan's reluctance to embrace creolisation (Noudelmann 2018, 322-23), can be critiqued for their lack of nuance or deeper knowledge of the complexities of these societies. Informed, as they are, by a combination of brief visits and literary engagements, they form part of a peculiar mode of anthropology that prefers distant and anecdotal knowledge over an attempt at developing a deeper expertise in the cultures concerned.

In his later fictional works in particular, Glissant connected the places and people he had encountered across his life by subsuming several of them under the umbrella of the concept of the fictional Batouto nation, in cases where he considered them to embody or represent his vision of the Tout-Monde. The indicators for Batouteness could be a specific gesture, or the use of a particular expression, or traditional practice (for an elaborate discussion see 4.3.). The Glissantian map of the Tout-Monde which I have sketched on the basis of a distant reading of the novels *Sartorius*, *Tout-Monde*, and *Ormerod*, presents a strong bias on the transatlantic region and is largely made up of the places Glissant visited, and the friends he made along the way, some of whom are listed at the end of his novel *Tout-Monde* (Illustration 5). The map of the world these points and shaded areas draw is marked by a strong bias on the transatlantic region. This focus emphasises that Glissant did not pay as much attention to the 'Orient' as he did to the 'Occident'.

In addition to the casual travels mentioned above, a growing number of academic conferences engaging with Glissant's work, from the 1990s onwards, sparked a related yet slightly different direction for Glissant's personal displacements. These meetings mainly followed the trajectory of the reception and appreciation of his work. They led him to first increasingly travel to various universities across the US and Canada, and later to Tunisia and Tokyo (2018, 73, 323). In contrast to the touristic travels mentioned above, these trips served more specifically to promote his ideas, maintain and extend his network of friends, create allies for his vision of the Tout-Monde. As elaborated in 2.3.2., the last decade of his life was particularly marked by what could be interpreted as the performance of a 'travelling preacher' or 'prophet of creolisation' who did not want to miss any opportunity to share his vision with an increasingly international audience.

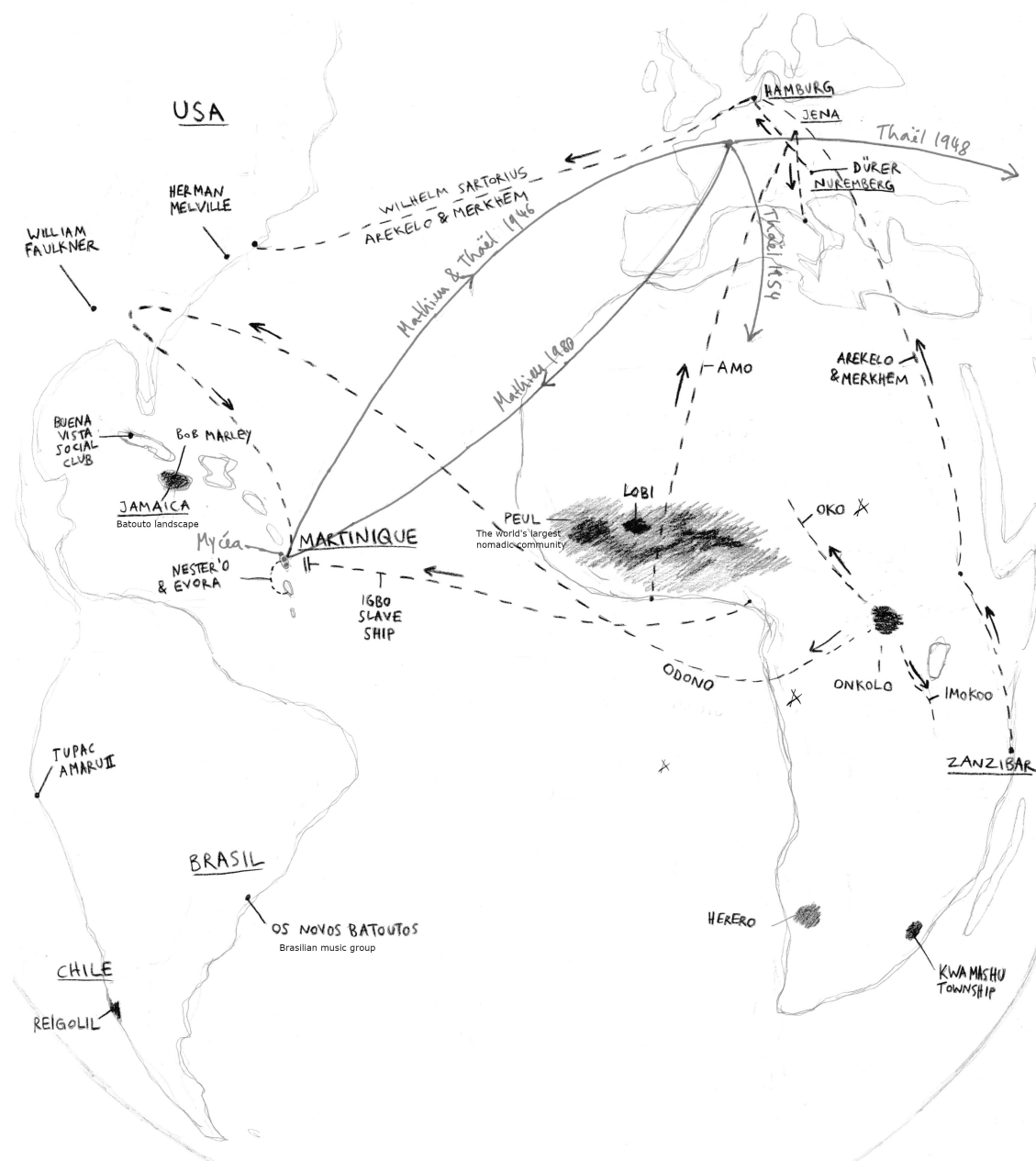


Illustration 5: Map of a selection of Batouto people and places in Glissant's novels *Sartorius* (1999), *Ormerod* (2003) and *Tout-Monde* (1993).

The practice of physically travelling and actually seeing the world, might be interpreted as an attempt of *confirming* his theory of the Tout-Monde, but also of *performing* a marronage into the world. From my view, the main aim of this flight into the world for Glissant was to get a sense of the differences of the world, as they are increasingly threatened by the homogenising project of globalisation. As mentioned in passing before, from the perspective of disciplines like anthropology or the social sciences the ease with which Glissant, proceeded to elaborate his political thought based on to intuitive impressions during relatively short amounts of time spent in a variety of places – which were moreover framed by the respective language barriers and his social status as

belonging to a cultural elite – might appear troublesome. The ease with which Glissant arrived at generalisations about certain cultures can, moreover, be deemed as problematic and as tending towards reproducing dominant clichés, I would like to point out two aspects which I find noteworthy in response to such criticism.

The first one pertains to the particularity of Glissant's poetic brand of anthropology. In contrast to anthropology's traditional concern with the study of the cultures of 'others' to gain the greatest amount of information about them, a project that was intimately linked with the colonial project of discovery and conquest, Glissant's travel notes perform more the 'giving-on-and-with' (PR 19), by not claiming to fully comprehend a particular culture or personality he encounters. Instead of claiming objectivity, Glissant's travel accounts are deeply subjective. This allows him to, for example, 'close read' Zulu culture through a set of interactions he observes in a KwaZulu-Natal township in *Sartorius*, as forming part of the invisible Batouto nation, but also to speculate about the Herero culture's vocation for the invisible through a 'distant reading' of a short article published in the *New York Times* in the same novel. Glissant's collaboration with his wife Sylvie Glissant in *La Terre magnétique – Les errances de Rapa Nui, l'île de Pâques* (2007) can perhaps count as the most pronounced inversion of the colonial mode of anthropology, which largely relied on the expertise of so-called 'native informants' that were invisibilised by the discipline. At this point in time, Glissant's health condition no longer allowed him to travel longer distances by plane. As part of a project initiated by his publisher *Gallimard*, Sylvie Glissant made the journey to the Easter Islands in his stead. The travel notes and sketches she compiled during her stay were the basis for Glissant's writing of the book, which is illustrated by the drawings of his wife. By envisioning or imagining the world of the Easter Islands through the account and pictures brought back by Sylvia Glissant, and theorising their importance of this 'small country' for the Tout-Monde, this collaboration effectively played with the old colonial division of labour between the field researcher venturing out into the periphery and the theorist who draws his conclusion on the basis of field notes at home. The crucial difference to this traditional model and the one performed by the Glissants is that the project was from the onset framed as an artistic experiment in travelling through a *relational imagination*. The prism through which the 'other culture' is seen is thus no longer a colonial prism geared towards conquering and expansion but the desire for 'one difference to encounter another', thus as a celebration of Glissant's perception of beauty.

A response to reservations about the 'superficiality' of the map of the Tout-Monde contained in illustration 5 could claim that, what is appealing about this map of the Tout-Monde is less the precision of his observations and the conclusion he draws from the brief glimpses of 'other worlds', but the fact that they offer a new framework through which they can be seen and evaluated.

Perceived through the framework of creolisation or the Tout-Monde, places and historic figures appear in a different light, as when they are viewed through dominant grids of social or economic development, Human Rights, the effectiveness of governance, or evolutionary notions of culture or History, that still inform the way different parts of the world are represented in mainstream media. Without claiming to issue absolute statements about the value of certain places and people, Glissant's travel itinerary and the traces they left in his oeuvre suggest an alternative lens through which they can be described, appreciated or criticised, namely through their ability to relate to the diversity making up the Tout-Monde.

A last remark relates to the previous one and concerns the highly personal nature of Glissant's map of the Tout-Monde. Important to note in this context is that Glissant did not claim to have the sole authority to draw this map. As he repeatedly asserted, everyone can and has the right to draw his own map of the Tout-Monde, made up of the people and places constituting it. Chamoiseau has reiterated this notion in his book *Frères migrants* (2017), to which I will return in more detail in section 5.2.2., where he argues that any poet of relation could sketch his own 'geographie cordiale', and could invent his own “composite country, ones archipelago-country, in the very substance of the world and to inhabit it in ones own way, in all visibility and in mystery”³⁰⁷ (92). Mapmaking, in this sense, and as outlined in the preface, becomes a quintessentially political work of revealing one's own imaginary, of revealing one's secret countries and networks of solidarity and spiritual descendants. In accordance with the transversal characteristic of Glissant's politics, this work does not remain on a textual level. In the remainder of this chapter, I will outline the way in which this conception of the world informed Glissant's organisational action around the setting up of the *Institut du Tout-Monde*.

A House for the Cultures of the Whole-World – Setting Up the Institut du Tout-Monde

More than 40 years after the establishment of the *Institut martiniquais d'études* (IME), Glissant established a second institution that would represent and disseminate his philosophy in a permanent way. While I framed the IME as an institutionalisation of his Caribbean vision (3.3.2.), the project of the *Institut du Tout-Monde* (ITM) reflects the global reach of his preoccupations at the beginning of the 21st century (Noudelmann 2018, 270-71). Whereas the political context in which Glissant set up the IME was hostile to that extent that Césaire's administration did not lend Glissant's project any financial support, the French political landscape appeared to be more conducive due to Glissant's aforementioned friendship with the French politician Dominique de Villepin (2.3.2.).

In his initial proposal for the ITM, Glissant envisioned it as a grand house of culture, with an

³⁰⁷“pays composite, son pays-archipel, dans la substance du monde et l'habiter à sa façon, dans l'évidence et le mystère“, my translation.

amphitheatre, an exhibition and theatre space located in a central part of Paris, in the Rue du Louvre. The institution, whose statutes were formulated in 2006, should be directed by Glissant's wife Sylvie, and by François Vitrani who was the director of the *Maison de l'Amérique latine*. Towards the end of 2006, the political climate did however change drastically when Ségolène Royale lost the presidential elections against Sarkozy in May 2007. The ties between Glissant's project and Villepin were too well-known for the new president to lend it any support. Instead of receiving financial support from the Ministry of Culture, Glissant's plans were passed down to the less important Regional Council of the Île-de-France and the Ministry of Overseas France. Instead of being able to rent a big building in central Paris, funding from these two official bodies allowed the ITM to set up its functions at the *Maison de l'Amérique latine* (Noudelmann 2018, 271-72). Although François Noudelmann, who was the director of the ITM from 2006 until 2017, relativises the intellectual leadership role played by Glissant (2018, 271-72), the set-up of the ITM clearly revolved around his persona and the promotion of his philosophical project. As Noudelmann points out, in contrast to the IME the ITM was neither envisioned as a school in the classic sense of the term, nor was it meant to turn into a scholarly space for academics to comment on his work (273). Officially launched in 2007, the ITM presented itself as follows on its website: “a rhizomatic place of Relation and exchanges, a platform where the imaginaries of the world meet, a space of expression for creolisation, an observatory of the unforeseeable steps of mondiality, of its accidents, its multiple and unexpected effects, of the metamorphosis of the living and of the utopias of contemporary humanities”³⁰⁸.

In practical terms, its activities comprised an annual seminar series organised by the *University Paris 8* situated on the outskirts of Paris in Saint-Denis, and hosted by the *Maison de l'Amérique latine* in the Paris city centre. The seminar was directed by Noudelmann and frequently invited friends, writers and intellectuals to 'study and discover the operations of creolisation' as Noudelmann pointed out in the introduction to the inaugural lecture in 2007. In addition to functioning as the platform for a community³⁰⁹ and a space for research and discussions, part of which are an annual literary prize (*Le Prix Carbet de la Caraïbe*), two scholarships and various lecture series in collaboration with institutions across the globe, the ITM's online presence and associated websites also effectively function as a virtual archive for several of Glissant's initiatives that did not materialise in his lifetime. This is the case with the *Projet biologique du monde*

308 “un lieu rhizome de Relation et d'échanges, une plate-forme où se rencontrent les imaginaires et les écritures du monde, un espace où se dit la créolisation, un observatoire des pas imprévisibles de la mondialité, de ses accidents, et des incidences multiples et inattendues des métamorphoses du vivant et des utopies des humanités contemporaines”, my translation.

309 For sympathisers with Glissant's work, the ITM functions in part like a community centre, as Aliocha Wald Lasowski points out in his description of it as: “un lieu d'échanges, de partages et de rencontres. Expositions, débats ou dialogues, c'est une effervescence culturelle et intellectuelle précieuse en ces temps où la culturelle est souvent mise à mal, dans un contexte politique de plus en plus difficile. À l'ITM, les projets avancés grâce à la dynamique et à la volonté des uns et des autres, grâce à l'amitié, à la fidélité” (2015, 15).

mentioned earlier (see 3.2.3.), but also of Glissant's project to create a *National Centre for the Memory of Slavery* (2.3.2.). Another case in point, and one that marks the zig-zagging motion between global and local preoccupations, is Glissant's project of a *Musée martiniquais des Arts des Amériques* (M2A2), which he envisioned as a museum of modern art based in Martinique that would present the underlying connections between American imaginaries (LCDL 257-59).³¹⁰ The online format allows the ITM to present historical documents, videos and audio recordings side by side, in a way that blends the visual and the audio in line with Glissant's general project of breaking up the barriers between genres and ways of writing.

Despite the ITM's discursive self-positioning and Glissant's personal aversion against 'academicism', the ITM did, to a large extent, turn into a space where a partisan scholarship on Glissant is produced as a collective exercise in better understanding his work and reaffirming what I have conceptualised as the mythification of his persona (2.3.). This impression imposes itself when one takes the Glissant-centric themes of the annual seminar series into account. Likewise, the conferences organised by the ITM³¹¹ could be considered as being more self-affirming in nature, than being committed to the kind of explorative movement into the world that I have sketched out in this section with regards to Glissant's personal trajectory. This observation is not meant to cast a negative light on the work done by the ITM, especially since the financial means at its disposal are limited.³¹² Instead, these comments have to be seen against the background of the findings of this chapter, which suggest that as a worldly institution created by Glissant, the ITM's movements could be more daring in the exploration of non-academic audiences and geographies falling outside the transatlantic triangle between France, the US and Martinique, as traced by Glissant himself.

Section Summary

This section dealt with the ways in which Glissant used his fiction, life-writing and organisational practice in ways that can be considered as an intellectual performance of marronage into the world. The line of flight traced through this lens was not limited to a set of isolated political actions to which Glissant or others have referred as resembling the actions of a modern maroon. Reading Glissant's trajectory as a whole through the lens of marronage made it possible to identify its main direction as proceeding from the island to the archipelago (3.3.2.), and from the archipelago to the world (3.3.3.). Although the conditions of historic marronage cannot be compared to the kind of jet-setting tourism that I have described in parts of this chapter, it is

310The exhibition space of a vacant factory, where the M2A2 was supposed to be installed, was destroyed and the M2A2 is now a 'nomadic museum whose place is the world', which also refers to the website of the *Institut du Tout-Monde*.

311For instance the conference series *Le discours antillais – La source et le delta*, with stops in Paris, Martinique, New York and San Francisco (2019-2020).

312In 2019, the *Institut du Tout Monde* issued a call for financial support on its Facebook page as part of a crowdfunding campaign to maintain its operation.

precisely in this abstract sense that Glissant employed the notion of marronage. To conclude the analytical work of this section, I am going to point out several characteristics that I find particularly noteworthy of this personal movement in the overall framework of this thesis.

A first remarkable character trait of Glissant's movements in the world is that they were not one-directional or following a straight line. Instead, they can be seen as regularly back-and-forth or zigzag movements. While the direction *towards the world* remains a constant, Glissant repeatedly related the experiences he made in various places of the world back to his own place in line with his above mentioned slogan of 'thinking with the world, acting in one's place'. A second aspect worth pointing out in that regard is that, instead of opting to directly confront the social actors that are in opposition to his political projects, Glissant repeatedly preferred the possibility of 'moving on', or 'moving away'. Instead of viewing this tendency to 'keep moving' as a weakness, the specific productivity of this practice remains to be further explored, particularly in the following chapter on the communities created during these various lines of flight.

In terms of the political implications of this practice of fugitivity, the way in which Glissant repeatedly inscribed his personal trajectory into his fictional oeuvre, especially with regards to the figure of Mathieu Béluse, as well as into his theoretical reflections in several of his essays and interviews was of repeated interest in this section. Seen through the theoretical lens espoused by this thesis, this practice of continually re-inscribing or translating biographical elements from fiction to non-fiction and back is not a politically neutral exercise. Accordingly, getting a sense of which aspects in Glissant's oeuvre can be considered as self-referential, and thus as being part of his life-writing practice, was not merely a matter of analytical rigour or clarity. Instead, the question posed at the onset of this chapter asked about the *political intention and effects* of Glissant's practice of repeatedly blurring autobiographical, fictional and theoretical elements.

In my reading of the complex entanglements of these different dimensions of life-writing I came across three main aspects to be retained for the ongoing work in this thesis: A first one relates to how Glissant turned his own biography into a mythical story that claims to be relevant in the realms of fiction and non-fiction alike. By abstracting from his personal trajectory and the fictional stories he created on its basis, Glissant effectively stylised himself as personally embodying the trajectory of a whole community, much like the hero figure of an epical tale. Secondly, the community represented by this mythical representation of himself, refers at the same time, to the struggle of Martinicans to enter into a relation with the world by overcoming the colonial blockage upheld by France, as well as a larger Caribbean community marked by a shared historic experience of slavery and marronage. Lastly, and this aspect will be elaborated in greater detail in the following chapter, the mythification of his personal movement towards the world also points towards the

creation of a world-community into which the individual 'river' that is the life of an individual flows, be it 'real' Glissant or the 'fictional' Mathieu. The creation of the *Institut du Tout Monde*, as an organisation that effectively reproduces the narrative of Glissant's worldly movement, gained in additional significance against this background by lending the mythical story of the 'prophet of relation' additional materiality and visibility.

Another aspect, and one that emerged primarily in the discussions between the fictional characters Mathieu and Thaël in *Tout-Monde* (3.3.2.), was the impression that Glissant used the realm of fiction to legitimise his poetic-political practice as being *just as valuable* as the commitment to radical action which the character of Thaël espouses across several of Glissant's novels. By casting their trajectories as complementary ways of relating to and 'moving into the world', Glissant employed the *detours* and *retours* made by these two fictional characters to denote different modes of political practice that have emerged from Afro-Caribbean contexts around the struggle for decolonisation. By caring, teaching and healing (Mycéa in 3.2.), relating and relaying (Mathieu) and by travelling, fighting and learning (Thaël) (3.3.) I consider Glissant's main fictional protagonists as expressions of a lived politics of relation. Although none of their biographies invite the celebration of their actions as heroic – consider Mycéa's 'madness', Mathieu's weakness, Thaël's schizophrenic actions in the army of a settler colonial power – their actions are portrayed as responses to the changed context (the world-totality) they find themselves in. Instead of anyone of the three being singled out, their qualities appear to add up and form a complete whole: Mycéa's consciousness, Mathieu's will to write, Thaël's will to fight. Their movements of being rooted on the island (Mycéa), of returning (Mathieu) or taking an open-ended detour through the world-totality (Thaël) thereby evoke the sense of a *wholistic political practice*.

A third and last observation refers to the impression that Glissant's personal movements, as well as the movements of his fictional characters create a new map of the world. This map is made up of personal experience as much as it is informed by reading the work of other poets.³¹³ The map created by Glissant's main fictional characters mainly links Martinique to France, Algeria and Indochina, thus primarily appearing as a map of (post)colonial France, and its violent encounters with other parts of the world. Only when Glissant's work of fiction is read in conjunction with life-writing accounts like Noudelmann's biography, does it become apparent that the fictional accounts of Mathieu's travels are based on Glissant's own physical displacements. The map made up of these individual locations expands the map of postcolonial France. In this map of the world, a map of the

313 I could have also focussed on his approach to poetry or world literature. Although Glissant travelled the world, his approach to the world was primarily informed by the work of writers and poets, and it was particularly influenced by the connection between the French literary tradition. His main 'information' about what the world came through poetry. Point to the study of how his studies of the work of writers and artists shifts from *L'Intention poétique* (1969) to the *Anthologie* (2010) would also make sense here, as I will elaborate in Chapter 4.

Tout-Monde, the binaries between North and South, East and West break down. Instead of imagining the world as constituted of great blocks, the map of the Tout-Monde is made up of 'infinite details' that make it impossible to discern whether one is on the right or wrong side of a political conflict. This is nowhere as apparent as in the trajectory of Thaël, who joins the war in Indochina and Algeria although he, as a fictional character, sympathises with their respective anti-colonial struggles, as much as Glissant himself clearly rejected these colonial wars (TM 335). In these instances, the politics of relation forces an acknowledgement of the infinite details of actions on all sides of the conflict without relativising the violence emanating and the different political projects behind these conflicts. What becomes of interest through Glissant's map of the Tout-Monde is thus an interrogation into which individuals and collectives shares a similar sensibility for the world as being made up of a radical diversity of cultures.

Chapter Summary

The main questions this chapter addressed asked in what sense one can speak of Glissant's oeuvre as taking on the form an intellectual movement of marronage into the world? How is the description of this movement of flight connected to the general characteristics of his politics of relation? And what is the dynamic between the different modes or media in which Glissant's political practice was expressed? In the following, I will briefly engage with these questions, thereby supplementing the analysis presented in each of the three main sections and their respective summaries.

In terms of the implications of this direction of Glissant's marronage for his political practice, the first section demonstrated how Glissant established a global level of as point of reference for political actions by fleeing from the conceptual confinement and segregational logic of the plantation system. Proceeding from the concrete place of Martinique this meant opening up the imaginary towards the realisation that there are 'other worlds out there', worlds that exist outside of the civilisational project proposed by the French (neo)colonial power. This project included the task of *liberating the imaginary* from the shackle of the colonial paradigm. In the case of Martinique, this paradigm maintained that it would be better to remain a *political and cultural* part of France than to foster inter-Caribbean solidarities. The second section (3.2.) spelled out what an adoption of this kind of world-view could look like when it is embodied in a fictional character, as well as in the form of a concrete political proposal. Endorsing a view of the world that is not limited to what the French nation-state model can or cannot accord to Martinicans, the *Manifeste pour un projet global* is a result of a consciousness of global political issues (such as climate change, nature deprivation) as much as it is informed by an awareness of the particularity of a specific locality and what this

place can contribute to the diversity of the world. In this case a wholly biological way of production. As an important characteristic of Glissant's politics of relation, the manifesto emphasised that a commitment to one specific aspect, such as nature preservation, can not be divorced from the greater context in which it is placed. Such as the political status of Martinique, as well as the general mode of production endorsed by the political and economic elite. Another specificity of the kind of political practice the *Manifeste* falls under is that, instead of undertaking to reach political goals through the established channels of political decision-making or a struggle for power (1.2.1.), the *Manifeste* addresses an alternative political community – while simultaneously trying to establish it – on a different sphere by calling for an inclusive assembly of everyone concerned by the proposition put forward by Glissant et al. Neither claiming authority, a representative role nor leadership for a particular cause, the signatories of the *Manifeste* present themselves as a small group of intellectual maroons inviting others to join them, on radically other political terms than the one upheld by French parliamentary democracy.

This aspect was further elaborated in section 3.3. with regards to the way Glissant self-fashioned his trajectory as a marronage into the world. Both Glissant himself, as well as those writing about his life, could be described as being collectively invested in presenting his biography as a trajectory proceeding from Martinique into the whole-world. In political terms, this narrative was framed as a personal founding myth in similar ways than the ones explored in the previous chapter. Glissant's belief in the power of constructing foundational narratives, was demonstrated by referring to the fictional interactions between Thaël and Mathieu that appeared to be, at least in part, modelled on an imaginary philosophic debate between a Fanonian theory of decolonisation and Glissant's poetics of relation. An important characteristic for the different physical dislocations of Glissant's personal trajectory is the move around, or out of, specific impasses or conflicts. When a specific political initiative did not bear the desired results, moving somewhere else was always an option for Glissant's political practice. In positive terms, this could be cast as the ability to adapt and adjust to different contexts and to use the world as an equivalent to the historic hinterland, in cultural or geographic terms, that provided the maroons with a zone of relative safety from persecution. The two institutions founded by Glissant can, in this light, be seen as concrete expressions of the kind of creative cultural work Glissant considered to be important in order to foster a the kind of global imaginary which he considered fundamental for political practice in times of the Tout-Monde.

While this kind of political action against the dominant mode of globalisation at the turn of the 21st century is largely in line with Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's thesis in their influential book *Empire* (2000), there are several difference that are noteworthy in the realm of political

theoretical debates. Whereas 'Empire', for Hardt and Negri, has a clear hierarchical structure geared towards exploitation and homogenisation, the 'Multitude' operates horizontally, democratically and is by definition diverse (Ziegler 2019, 308). Placing their hopes in effective modes of resistance to globalisation in the hands of social movements against Empire, Glissant's notion of mundanity, puts larger emphasis on the actually existing cultural differences on earth and the belief that a resistance to globalisation has to consist of both naming and protecting these differences. As Glissant's definition of Relation indicates (1.4.1), these differences can range from the smallest details to larger cross-national differences and can therefore not be equated with international relations. The reference for relational political action is thus a respect of the totality of cultural differences which the more than 500 year long history of globalisation has produced. Instead of homogenising cultural differences, and placing a priority on neo-Marxist modes of analysis, a risk which the notions of Multitude or slogans such as the Occupy movement's "we are the 99 per cent" stand in danger of perpetuating, Glissant's marronage into the world agrees with the basic premise that, in a globalised world, politics needs to be thought globally, thus beyond the confines of the nation-state, but is primarily committed to encounter, collect, protect and defend the differences that constitute the wealth of the Earth according to Glissant.

In each of the sub-sections of this chapter, a particular dynamic between the modes in which Glissant's political practice operated could be observed. Whereas the first section focussed on how the fictional and non-fictional realms were set into relation, the second explored how political action was re-inscribed into fiction, and the third how life-writing and fiction, but also how life-writing, abstract political thought and institutional actions were combined in Glissant's oeuvre. While the crossing of these different formal boundaries is in itself a noteworthy characteristic of Glissant's politics, identifying a specific rule or pattern between them was difficult to ascertain. Without trying to detect a fixed law between them, I would, however, argue that the way Glissant employed these different genres was not arbitrary, chaotic or aimed at demonstrating that 'everything is related to everything'. Instead, bearing the different formal movements discussed in this chapter in mind, I would argue that it is *the combination or synergies between them that lends Glissant's politics its specific force.*

Similarly to the strategy of moving on from or out of specific political impasses, which I traced in the trajectory of the narrative produced by Glissant's life-writing practice, transitioning from one format or medium to another allowed Glissant to develop his work further, even when a line of action did not heed the desired outcomes. The time-frame for Glissant's politics, which I introduced as being in line with the notion of 'planetary time' (Dimock), is sufficiently vast to accommodate a broader time-scale to evaluate the impact of particular political interventions.

A similar pattern could be observed about Glissant's practice of mixing life-writing, fiction and institutional work. While the manner in which Glissant wrote and spoke about his life evokes a mythical embodiment of a larger political community shaped by the forces of creolisation, this performance and the values embodied by this singular life gain in cultural and political force, in Watson and Smith's understanding, by the way in which it reappears in the fictional realm in the character of Mathieu. Moreover, the general orientation of the ITM, as an institutional body and a living archive of Glissant's work, allows for Glissant's political practice of a marronage to be preserved and promoted as a model for others to emulate, comment and draw on. As the setup of institutions like the ITM point out, the community-aspect of this kind of political practice, what I have above referred to as the transformation of a *petit marronage* into a collective, *grand* or sociogenic marronage (Roberts) (2.1.2.), is closely interwoven with Glissant's movement towards the world. The following chapter is dedicated to a more extensive exploration of this direction.

Chapter 4:
From Individual Isolation
to the Creation of World-Communities

A Marronage Towards Alternative
Ways of Being Together

4.0. Chapter Introduction

“*La parole de l'artiste antillais ne provient donc pas de l'obsession de chanter son être intime; cet intime est inséparable du devenir de la communauté*”³¹⁴

– Édouard Glissant, *Le discours antillais* (LDA 439)

The community aspect of Glissant's politics of relation, seen through the prism of an intellectual movement of marronage, has appeared in passing in the two previous chapters. The creation of maroon communities as 'zones of refuges' in the forests and mountains of the Caribbean and the Americas was not only identified as an important factor in historical cases of marronage (2.1.), but also as being closely entangled with the strategy of a flight oriented towards the world, as described in the previous chapter. In each case I argued that Glissant's engagement with history, as well as his personal performance of marronage can be closely associated with his commitment to alternative communal projects, especially through the invention of new founding myths (2.3.) and institutions (3.3.). This chapter focusses on this dimension of his political thought and practice in closer detail.

Instead of perceiving the decision to invest into the establishment of new kinds of communities as taking place *after* the movement into the past and into the world, this chapter can be seen as elaborating on a process that takes place *concurrently* with the lines of flight outlined in chapters 2 and 3. Along the lines of the previous chapter, the main questions that I am going to address in the following asks whether Glissant's work for the creation of communities be read as forming part of a practice of marronage? And what implications does this movement from individual isolation to the creation of a new sense community have for Glissant's politics of relation? Among the sub-questions deriving from this inquiry is an interest in the *kind of communities* Glissant created: Who belonged to it? According to which criteria? On what scales did or do these communities operate? Which position did Glissant occupy within these communities? And how can their characteristics be compared to prevalent community theories as they have been discussed in philosophical debates and in the social sciences? In order to comprehensively describe the strategy of community creation, as it forms part of Glissant's political archive, different 'genres' of his work need to be brought in relation with one another, leading, yet again, to an expansion of the established list of Glissant's 'political work' to include elements that are not usually considered as belonging to the 'activist' part of about his work.

³¹⁴“The discourse of the Antillean artist does not arise from the obsession to sing about his intimate being; this intimate being is inseparable from the emergence of a community“, my translation.

Community Context in the Caribbean and the Task of the Poet

In a Caribbean context, Glissant's concern for the 'problem of community' was not a singular phenomenon. As Celia Britton points out in her book *The Sense of Community in French Caribbean Fiction*, to which I will return in greater detail further below,

“history of transportation, slavery and migration has created a situation in which the question of community becomes particularly urgent. [...] In these violently dislocated populations, there could be no 'natural' sense of community evolving peacefully over the years; rather the problem of community conceived both in terms of collective practices and institutions, and on the subjective level of collective identity, generates a deep seated anxiety in the French Caribbean“ (2008, 1).

Britton continues, referring among others to the work of Maryse Condé and Simone Schwarz-Bart, to make the case, that “this is in fact the major task that French Caribbean intellectuals have set themselves. The main cultural and political movements that have brought together writers, artists and politicians since the Second World War have all revolved around the issue of consciously creating a sense of community” (3). Since, as Britton reminds us in the above quote, the community could or and cannot be taken for granted in the socio-historic context from which Glissant's work emerged, it had to be defended or consciously created through political action, against the threats of assimilation or annihilation, whether at the hands of the colonial project or the homogenising forces of neo-liberal globalisation.

The emphasis on the necessity to 'create' can, in this context, refer Glissant's use of the term 'poetics' back to the Greek origins of the term *poiesis*, meaning 'to make', or the “the activity in which a person brings something into being that did not exist before“ (Polkinghorne 2004, 115). In the realm of literary production, this specific conception of poetics, again, directly evokes the charge of the transformative energy of written work that seeks to exercise an influence that extends beyond the textual dimension. As the epigraph to this chapter reiterated, a specificity of the Afro-Caribbean literary tradition Glissant associated himself with, was that its main concern was not to reach *deep* into the human psyche, to describe or explain its inner workings and existential struggles, in order to, instead, reach *wide*, understood both in the sense of relating the individual to the community and in the sense of the movement into the world elaborated in chapter 3. As Michael J. Dash has pointed out about Glissant's work in general, not the individual 'I' but the collective 'we' becomes the site of the generative system (1995, 4). How exactly this 'we' was produced in Glissant's work will be the subject of the ensuing chapter.

As the secondary literature on Glissant's communities noted, and what could also be inferred from the general discussion up until this point, the conceptions of community Glissant evoked in his work generally differ from notions of community that rely on ideas of homogeneity and closure (Britton 2008, 4). Although Glissant worked with different notions of community, depending on the

local, regional and global levels with which his work was concerned, Britton has pointed out that all of these communities share an openness and relationality that undermines any claims at autarky, sovereignty or isolation. Another aspect to be noted at the onset of this chapter is that the communities Glissant wrote *about*, *from* or *to* were hardly ever made explicit. As Dash points out, instead of writing *on behalf of* or *for* the 'wretched of the earth' (Fanon), or a community tied bound by shared 'racial roots' or an essentialised black being (Césaire/Senghor) (1995, 4), Glissant wrote *about* communities that are not explicitly referred to as black in his fictional narratives, telling their stories with as much complexity as literally possible, as a way to – amongst other things – produce concepts that new types of communities and alternative collective identities could be constructed around. Bearing in mind the equal importance Glissant attributed to structure, content and style in his literary work, similar aspects are also important to interrogate about the formation of communities he was involved with. Against this background, the study of Glissantian communities in this chapter, therefore promises to contribute to inquiries that are interested in the exploration of alternative political forms that fall outside the established model of the nation-state and have, for instance been referred to by Yarimar Bonilla as 'non-sovereign' which I will discuss further below (4.1.2.). The essentially *political* nature of Glissant's work on communities is in line with the conception of the political I have outlined in sections 1.2., more than with traditional conceptions that limit the political to power struggles in established political communities that are taken for granted, as pre-existing or *natural*. Rather than being concerned with the governance of a particular area or of a presupposed people, this chapter thus addresses the question of what constitutes a community, who belongs to it? And how does it relate to other communities according to Glissant's philosophy?

There are various ways in which Glissant took up the 'challenge' or task of creating communities. Taking his whole oeuvre into consideration, and reading it relationally, it is possible to roughly discern three levels on and across which his 'strategy of community creation' operated. These include, firstly, the local levels of the island and the nation-states in which he lived. Projects in this context included first and foremost his work around the independence of Martinique (4.1.2.), or its transformation into a *Pays biologique* (3.2.4). It also involved a direct engagement with policy discussions in a French and US-context with the aim of turning these states into what he called *nations-relations* (5.3.). As a second level, on the regional scale of the archipelago, his commitment for the project for a Caribbean Federation and the proposition of Antillanité are particularly noteworthy. On a third level, his work operated on the global level of the Tout-Monde with which he associated the project of imagining a 'world-community'.

Differentiating between these different spheres risks implying a teleological evolution from

the local to the global community, or an increasingly apolitical form of postmodern escapism that shies away from an engagement with 'real politics' conceived in emancipatory nationalist terms, as advanced by Glissant's critics following Peter Hallward (see 1.3.1.). Without disavowing such a trend in Glissant's preoccupations *over time*, my proposition of grouping Glissant's strategy of creating communities loosely around these three different levels is mainly based on the argument that Glissant's politics operated on all of these different levels *across different points in time*, and set them in relation with one another. Put differently, his engagement with the abstract and concrete question of community-creation did not develop in a steady evolution from the local to the global, but was rather characterised by a back-and-forth movement, linking the local with the global in creative ways that corresponded to changing political challenges from the mid 20th to the early 21st century. This zigzagging motion could for instance be exemplified, by the aforementioned project of turning Martinique into a *Pays biologique du monde* in the early 2000s (3.2.4.), with which Glissant effectively linked 'global environmental concerns with the same national frame he sought to redefine in his decolonial engagements in the early 1960s as part of the FAGA. Alternatively, as I will elaborate further below (4.3.4.), one could also date the beginnings of a project like the *Anthology of the Tout-Monde* (2010), which is concerned with establishing a list of writers adhering to a 'world-community of poets' as early as the collection of literary criticism conceived between 1953-1961 and collected in his essay book *L'Intention poétique* (1968).

Chapter Structure

The general structure of this chapter reflects what I perceive to be the general dynamic in Glissant's work on communities, namely a concurrent movement from the island to the world, and from the realms of fiction to non-fiction, without these movements being understood in a linear or one-directional fashion.

In order to place Glissant's efforts of bringing world communities into existence in the context of Glissant's political initiatives on local and regional levels, as well as with his work around notions of nation- and statehood (in contrast to 'community'), I will precede the study of Glissant's (world) communities with an overview of different conceptions of 'community' as they have been discussed in philosophic and social scientific discourse with particular emphasis being placed on the difference of so-called traditional (pre-modern), modern and postmodern conceptions, of which the work of Jean-Luc Nancy will receive particular attention (4.1.1.). This conceptual work around the notion of community will be followed by an engagement with Glissant's approach to the question of Martinique's status as a political community, an issue that has appeared as a theme in Glissant ecological project (3.2.4.), and warrants to be set in conversation with larger debates in the Caribbean context around the notions of national autonomy and sovereignty (4.1.2.). This

preliminary work will provide the required theoretical and historic background against which the particularities of Glissant's own political practice around communities can be studied. The second section (4.2.) traces how Glissant set out to imagine communities in his fictional work against the socio-historical background of a radical sense of isolation brought about by the slave trade and the plantation system. Another close reading of *Le quatrième siècle* (1964) and *Ormerod* (2003) will reveal how communities appear both on the level of content, style and structure in these texts, to show how Glissant's communities can be seen as moving out both from the confines of the island towards a larger geography of the archipelago, as well as from the fictional realm into a non-fictional realm. The third section (4.3.) moves further in this direction by demonstrating how Glissant imagined the Batouto people, a global fictional community, rendering the characteristics and modes of relation shaping Glissant's conception of communities more concrete, while maintaining an inherent vagueness that is cast as a necessary save-guard against the fixation of communitarian identities. This section begins with an account of fictional characters, but becomes more 'concrete' towards the end in an analysis of how Glissant established a list of 'real life' authors and artists who, in his view, express a specific relational imaginary through their work. The fourth and final section of this chapter (4.4.) further emphasises the general transition from fictional work to organisational action in Glissant's work by demonstrating how Glissant sought to actively produce and reproduce world-communities through two different organisational initiatives. The first case will be presented as a Glissantian project for a world-community of readers through his editorial work at the *UNESCO Courier* from 1982 to 1988. The second case will be framed as the project of a world-community of writers created by a network of 'cities of refuge' established by the *International Parliament of Writers*, with which Glissant was involved from 1993-2003.

As a brief outlook into the main findings of this chapter, the transferral of the historic vocation and necessity of maroons to create communities outside the annihilating context of the plantation system will become further apparent as a central characteristic of Glissant's politics of relation. Moreover, the decision to move away, out of an oppressive political system, will emerge as directly associated with the exploration of alternative, more relational, ways of being together in the course of this research. The kinds of world-communities Glissant created were decolonial in the sense of operating according to a conceptual register outside the dominant paradigm of sovereign nation-states and fixed conceptions of identity, as well as a categorical exclusiveness of placing one type of political community over another. Moreover, they can be deemed as essentially antiracist in the sense that what binds the different members of these communities together is their respect for a relational imaginary. Reading Glissant's practice of community-building through the lens of marronage will turn out to be a productive lens through which the political dimension of new

aspects of his work will become visible. Further substantiating the finding about the versatility of Glissant's politics of relation so far, his complex engagements around the creation of communities will reveal the multilayered quality of Glissant's political practice, a practice that not only constantly troubles the divisions between what is real and what is imagined, between discursive and non-discursive dimensions, but also a practice that operates on a continuum of political significance, reaching from such a small entity as a singular letter on one extreme end, to a collaboration with international institutions on the other.

4.1. Rethinking Forms of Togetherness – From the Nation-State Paradigm to Non-Sovereign Futures

“the political is the place where community as such is brought into play”

– Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (1991, xxxvii)

In cases where Glissant's political thought was concerned with collective modes of being together he did not consistently refer to the notion of 'community' (*communauté*), nor did he develop an explicit theory of communities as such. In his writings he also referred to '*pays*' (country), *peuple* (people) or '*nation*' when he addressed the issue of community. Naming this particular realm of Glissant's political practice as being concerned with 'community creation', is thus my own attribution, but it is one that I perceive to be conceptually inclusive enough to accommodate Glissant's work concerning countries and nations alike. Since the broadness of the term is also largely owing to its inherent vagueness, the following sub-section will present an overview of how the term has been employed in philosophical and sociologic discourse, and will introduce the intervention of Jean-Luc Nancy's work on communities as representative for a postmodern line of thought that has been associated with the work of Glissant by Celia Britton, whose work on Glissant's politics in the realm of literature and language (1999) and globalised politics (2009) (1.3.1.) this study seeks to complement. The following sub-section will outline the socio-historic and theoretical reasons why it makes sense to position a part of Glissant's political work generally in the context of theorisations on communities – as opposed to a more narrow framework of revolutionary and anticolonial nationalism –, by depicting the reasons for Glissant's own distancing from these classical modes of nation-building, which led him to explore the potentials of non-sovereign forms of political communities (4.1.2.).

4.1.1. From 'Blood and Soil' to the 'Impossible Community' – On Modern and Postmodern Community Conceptions

Similar to other central political concepts such as freedom, rationality and democracy, Rosa et al. point out that the meaning of the term 'community' is subject to ongoing debates (2010, 174).³¹⁵ Notwithstanding its different cultural connotations, they remark that communities are generally being associated with positive attributes like warmth, security, love, friendship and trust, which is part of the reason why it tends to be seen as a more apolitical notion than terms like 'class', 'movement' or 'interest group', and is also often rhetorically opposed to phenomena of alienation, isolation and loss of purpose associated with the notion of 'society' (10). As a conceptual binary to

³¹⁵In this sub-section I rely on the work of Rosa et al. *Theorien der Gemeinschaft*. Although their study focusses on German debates around the concept of '*Gemeinschaft*', they point out that the general characteristics of discourses on the notion of community are shared in Anglophone and Francophone discourses alike, despite differences in culture-specific connotations (2010, 9).

'society', Rosa et al. claim that community can be considered as occupying a central position in the discourse of modernity from the 19th century onwards. Several political movements, most infamously communism and national socialism, have employed it to denote a return to 'pre-modern' and allegedly more natural, homogeneous and harmonious forms of togetherness (10). Despite its ubiquity in everyday and political discourse, few theories have been directly concerned with communities and their creation (11-12). With regards to the strongly politically charged nature of the question of the communal, Rosa et al. write “what could be more *political* than the question about the 'We', the question about the demos, the ruling collective?”³¹⁶ (12).

This view not only refers back to my earlier arguments about the need to expand notions of the political from a focus on contests of power towards an acknowledgement of the fundamental questions of who belongs and who does not belong to specific political communities (see 1.2.1.). It is also important to underline, since it tends to get overlooked in political theoretical discussions that take the contemporary forms of political communities constituted in the form of nation-states as a given. In line with the interwoven nature of literature, culture and the collective as being characteristic for the black intellectual tradition (1.2.3.). Glissant's fictional or non-fictional engagements with political systems of governance appear only sporadically, whereas his work addressed the question of the community on an ongoing basis. The following overview of established community conceptions in modern and postmodern discourse will serve as a basis on which Glissant's engagement for communities can be better understood.

Modern Communities and the Issue of the Nation-State Model

The dichotomy between society and community in modern Western discourse, which Rosa et al. date back to the second half of the 19th century as the advent of industrialisation and capitalism (2010, 30-32), did not have the same importance in the Caribbean. While the notion of community gained particular relevance vis-à-vis the phenomena of urbanisation, poverty and increasing individualisation in 'the masses' in Europa (32), the 'loss of community' and 'alienation' from ones own labour took place in a significantly more brutal form in colonial spaces. In both cases, and for drastically different reasons, the notion of community turned into a projection screen for a lost sense of togetherness and a goal to be pursued in political struggles (34). Whereas, in the West, intellectual currents like Romanticism, took up the term and associated it with 'natural' feelings, instincts, myths and traditions that express 'pre-modern' collectivities (37), in decolonial movements the project of establishing a sense of community based on shared political solidarities (e.g. Pan-Africanism), or the struggle to establish black nation-states (e.g. post-revolutionary Haiti), was synonymous with the struggle for liberation from oppression and thus closely entangled with

³¹⁶“Denn was könnte politischer sein als die Frage nach dem 'Wir', die Frage nach dem demos, dem regierenden Kollektiv?“, my translation

movements that developed into anticolonial struggles and identity-based 'politics of difference' that claimed group-based political rights, such as the civil rights movement in which African Americans claimed equal rights under national law in the 1950s and 60s to end centuries of legal discrimination following the official end of slavery. This historical background is important in so far as Glissant did not refer to communities in negative a critical opposition to a 'cold industrialised society', but in a decolonial tradition that is committed to the creation of communities *out of nothing*, or to the *creation of a new sense of being together* against a modern or (neo)colonial project of segregation operating on all levels: between man and nature, between individual human beings and the collectives they form.

Among attempts to conceptualise communities in neatly analytical terms, the proposition made by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnis in the late 19th century has been particularly influential. In opposition to society's allegedly 'temporary, constructed, superficial, artificial, rational, goal-orientated, contract-based, abstract, mechanic and cold form of association', Tönnis suggested to differentiate among communities based on blood (kinship), place (neighbourliness) and spirit (friendship) (41). With the development of the discipline of sociology, which could be said to have the 'crisis of community' as its central object of analysis (33), the notion of community was increasingly freed from its binary opposition to society, and the focus shifted towards processual questions of how communities are being created (48-50). Instead of exclusively referring to bounds of biological kinship, geographic neighbourliness or shared interests, the defining aspect for a community became vaguely circumscribed as a 'shared horizon of values that is reflected in collective daily practices' (51-52). In these so-called 'post-traditional' forms of community, shared histories, traditions or genealogies, do not matter as much as before. Instead, new criteria for what gets to count as a community was a dynamic of feelings of inclusion (feeling of belonging) and exclusion (not-us) that is attributed to shared interests, values and access to shared spaces of interaction such as scenes, subcultures, fan clubs, internet, brand communities or festivals (62). From this perspective, communities are generally no longer seen as 'natural' but as being constantly constructed, maintained and transformed. As a result, specific attention was paid to the dynamic between the inside and outsides of communities and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. The view that communities have to be somewhat exclusive, and often rely on the identification of a scape goat, and the drawing of borders, has been particularly prominent in this context (76), although 'the other' is not universally constituted in absolute terms of the dichotomy between enemies and friends (Carl Schmitt), since it can take on more relative forms as well (80).

Brought in conversation with the concept of the nation-state, the question of the political

dimension of community³¹⁷ moves from a vague sense or feeling of togetherness to a legalistic or institutionalised level. Conventionally referring to a “body of people who possess some sense of a single communal identity, with a shared historical tradition, with major elements of common culture, and with a substantial proportion of them inhabiting an identifiable geographical unit“ (Scruton 2007, 329) the genealogy of the nation as a dominant normative and singular modal for collectivity can be traced back to early modern Europe and the process of colonial expansion in the 18th century, from where it was 'exported' across the world (Bartels et al. 2019, 11). Constituting a transferral of objective or natural bonds of belonging, such as kinship, towards an imaginary realm, Rosa et al. define the conceptual entanglement of nations and communities in the following terms: “Nations are imagined communities that foster unity and level differences internally [...] and distinguish themselves from the outside and emphasise differences against those who do not belong”³¹⁸ (Rosa et al. 2010, 82). Following the disenchantment with nation-building projects along Western models, postcolonial critics began exploring less static conceptions of political collectivity from the 1980s onwards, by turning their attention to more fluid conceptions of community and identity through notions such as 'diaspora, the liminal and hybrid in-betweenness' (12). Both against this background, as well as in view of the more recent backlash of chauvinistic nationalisms in the 21st century, the question of imagining new kinds of communities beyond the nation has been identified as an urgent task for postcolonial scholars (13), for which a more thorough interrogation of the notion of community, as I undertake it here concerning Glissant, might prove beneficial. After having briefly outlined modern conceptions of community, I will now turn to an interrogation of Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of being-in-common, which forms part of a larger Francophone postmodern philosophical discourse that has been associated with Glissant through the work of Celia Britton.

The Postmodern Community Conception in Jean-Luc Nancy's Community Without Community

In his book *The Inoperative Community* (1991), written against the immediate geopolitical background of the end of the Cold War and the onset of the hegemony of the neoliberal political model (1991, xxxviii), Jean-Luc Nancy set out to found a new thought of community based on his assumption of an essential 'relationality' of human beings. In Nancy, this essential relationality is

³¹⁷Due to the predominant association of the term 'community' with the fields of sociology and anthropology, 'political communities' are not strictly defined in the realm of political science. In fact, if community is understood as a basic kind of sociability (shared habits, ideas, practices) it might even be constructed in opposition to politics. For Rosa et al. political communities in the classical sense comprise nations or ethnic, cultural or religious groups that are committed to expressing themselves and struggle for political, legal, or social recognition (2010, 153). My own use of the term takes a broader conception of the political into consideration and does thus not rely on a fixed opposition between a political and non-political realm. In line with Rancière, any kind of community can potentially *become* political (1.2.2., 1.2.3.).

³¹⁸“Nationen sind imaginierte Gemeinschaften, die nach innen einheitsstiftend wirken und bestehende Differenzen [...] nivellieren, sich nach außen aber abgrenzen und eine Differenz setzen gegenüber denjenigen, die nicht dazugehören“, my translation.

closely associated with the experiences of birth and death, which are impossible to experience alone but presuppose the existence of others. As he writes: “This consciousness – or this communication – is ecstasy: which is to say that such a consciousness is never mine, but to the contrary, I only have it in and through the community“ (19). Nancy's conception of community does not rely on fixed substances, essences or identities with which he associates modern nationalist or traditional communitarian projects, but instead suggests that communities are shaped by ever-changing relations and communication (160). In the *Inoperative Community* he writes in that sense: “that it can no longer be a matter of figuring or modelling a communitarian essence in order to present it to ourselves and to celebrate it, but that it is a matter rather of thinking community, that is, of thinking its insistent and possibly still unheard demand, beyond communitarian models or remodelings“ (22). As will become more apparent in the course of this chapter, the anti-communitarian thrust of Nancy's work, which goes against the tendency among a classic understanding of communitarianism that takes the community as a given, natural, or fixed collective, is shared by Glissant's own aversion to fix forms of togetherness and ascribe a particular ethics to relations within such a community.³¹⁹ The notion of being-in-common, which Nancy also refers to as 'being-with', 'being-with-one-another', 'communication', 'sharing', 'exposition', 'compearance' – is of such essential importance to the human condition according to Nancy that it precedes any kind of fixed community. In the same vein, Nancy insists that communities can neither be created or produced:

“community cannot arise from the domain of work. One does not produce it, one experiences or one is constituted by it as the experience of finitude. Community understood as a work or through its works would presuppose that the common being, as such, be objectifiable and producible (in sites, persons, buildings, discourses, institutions, symbols: in short, in subjects)“ (31).

For him, the idea that a community can be willed into existence, by an individual or a collective, is based on problematic, and potentially totalitarian, ideas of turning a multiplicity into one, or to fixate singular forms of being-in-common into permanent institutions. As he writes “The community that becomes *a single* thing (body, mind, fatherland, Leader ...) necessarily loses the *in* of being-*in*-common. Or, it loses the *with* or the *together* that defines it“ (xxxix). This line of argument leads Nancy to make the case for a kind of community marked by “a bond that forms ties without attachments, or even less fusion, of a bond that unbinds by binding, that reunites through the infinite exposition of an irreducible finitude“ (xl). In the emphasis on the basic sociality of human beings, which has also been associated with African relational ontologies like *ubuntu* – which refers to the assumption “I am, therefore we are, and because we are, I am” (John Mbiti) in

³¹⁹Communitarianism is usually defined in opposition to the core assumption of liberalism, which holds that “that each individual is the sole legitimate decision maker in what counts as good for himself” (Robertson 2002, 102). Communitarians perceive communities to be built through tradition and history, and claim that individuals are most content when they live out the values of a community and assist in its development. In communitarian thought, what the community is tends to be assumed as a metaphysical entity that is, at times, indistinguishable from the state (see also Rosa et al. 2010, 94).

contrast to the individualist Enlightenment notion of “I think, therefore I am” (Descartes) – as well as on the privileging of 'elective' forms of togetherness based on friendship and love, more so than ties of blood, Nancy's notion of being-in-common can indeed be seen as being in proximity to certain aspects of Glissant's relational imagination. Britton has explored this proximity in her book *The Sense of Community in French Caribbean Fiction* (2008), where she argues that, like Glissant, Nancy articulated a conception of community that operates against traditional communitarian ideals of communities as “organic, homogenous, self-conscious, and provides a strong collective identity“ (9). For Britton, Nancy's notion of *being-in-common* is a necessary step against what Glissant referred to as the danger of projects invested in upholding exclusivist ideals of the 'One'. As she points out citing Nancy, a community of *being-in-common* consists in the *relations* between 'singular beings': “The singular is primarily each one and, therefore, also with an among all the others. The singular is a plural“ (10).

This general overlap aside, there are several aspects where I consider Glissant and Nancy's positions to divert strongly from one another. This is in part owing to what I perceive to be a drastic conceptual leap from an anti-fascist stance against totalitarian communities towards a categorical rejection of any formation of any formation of what is conventionally understood as a political community on Nancy's part. His conception of the community is effectively incompatible with the institutional-legal procedures and executive power structures of political communities in the form of nation-states (170). Bearing strong resemblances with Rancière's radical conception of the political (1.2.2.), 'real communities' remain ephemeral for Nancy, if not an outright impossibility. Because whenever a particular communal order is created in which particular roles are being assigned to individuals, the political or the democratic moment would be replaced by what Rancière called 'the police' or what Nancy calls the dominance of 'technological economies' (xli). If one tried reconciling Nancy and Rancière's positions further, the debate about 'who we are' should thus never be brought to an end, because the ongoing and open-ended questioning about who and what constitutes the community ensures the existence of the political (Rosa et al 2010, 172). This conviction, that communities need to remain a somewhat paradoxical endeavour expressed in the formula of a 'community without community', differs significantly from Glissant's deliberate project of inventing new founding myths as elaborated in chapter 2, and from the existential necessity of creating new communities as part of the historical movement of marronage (1.4.3.)

This difference alludes to a more general contrast between Nancy's postmodernism and the black intellectual tradition of thought. In other words, Nancy's Eurocentrism, which is above all haunted by the spectre of totalitarian European regimes of the 20th century, make his categorical thought of community incompatible with decolonial initiatives struggling for liberation from

oppression by claiming a different kind of spiritual and institutionalised community. In Glissant's context this was a claim against being (exclusively) part of a French political community and as a result essentially cut-off from the rest of the world (Britton 2008, 1). Juxtaposing Nancy to Glissant in this manner, also highlights another difference, one that concerns the categorical exclusionary nature of Nancy's conception of the community. Whereas one of the basic characteristics of Glissant's political practice is that it does not operate with an either-or-logic, and cannot be limited to a singular realm of political action, Nancy seems to insist that there is only 'one right way' to think and work on communities. In contrast, Glissant's work on communities, as this chapter will present in more detail, can be considered to operate *not only* with traditional and modern notions of communities based on a shared history and geography, *and* nations as imagined political communities, *as well as* more open-ended senses of spiritual communities *and* the kind of intrinsically elusive or 'impossible communities' evoked by Nancy.

The question to be posed to Glissantian communities is thus also slightly more complex than the opposition between modern and postmodern, or open and closed communities, as proposed by Britton. The clear-cut differentiation Britton proposes between communities thus risks being reductive. No community, one could argue, is just one or the other. What appears more interesting, from my point of view, are the shifting theoretical and discursive grounds on which communities are imagined, and the intricate dynamics of identification resulting from them. A potential explanation for Britton's perception of Nancy and Glissant's philosophical kinship, which I find important to note from a disciplinary point of view, could be that by studying the theme of community *in* Glissant's novels, as she does in *The Sense of Community*, Britton misses the opportunity to detect the communities these novels are building *outside* the textual level. This bias can be associated with a larger tendency among literary scholars engaging with Glissant, who tend to reference Glissant's overtly political statements on specific themes while avoiding the larger decolonial political project in which they are embedded (1.3.3.). Formulated in more general disciplinary terms, this reading might thus, in part, be attributable to a narrow conception of the political in the field of literary studies. Britton's reading of Nancy, in that sense, confirms the impression, that the case for a defence of the political dimension of Glissant's work cannot be made on fictional grounds alone, but has to take life-writing practices and extra-textual actions into account as well.

Before I proceed with this line of study, the following sub-section outlines another important context for the interrogation of Glissant's communities by describing his changing positions vis-à-vis the political status of Martinique and the larger regional and historical background of these political theoretical adjustments.

4.1.2. The Status Issue in the Caribbean and the Political Potential of 'Non-Sovereign Futures'

In 1946, the French colonies of Martinique, Guadeloupe, Réunion, and French Guiana changed their status into so-called *Départements d'outre mer* (DOMs) (Overseas Departments) of France. While this legal transformation was tied to the promise of granting France's former colonial subjects complete integration into the French Republic, and a socioeconomic equality with the citizens of mainland France, also referred to as the Hexagon, the Departments' integration was never fully pursued, and a set of legal sub-clauses cemented their neocolonial status as separate, different or outside the Hexagon – a status roughly similar to the status of Hawaii or Alaska in the United States (Bonilla 2015, 2). The question of whether Martinique should gain official independence from France or keep its status as a Department has remained a constant (sub)theme running across the work of Glissant and of this thesis. Engaging with this issue at the onset of this chapter will the set of abstract conceptual debates outlined about communities above more concrete. In order to provide an overview of Glissant's main lines of thought on the form of political communities in Martinique and the Caribbean region, I will, firstly, refer to the volume *Visite à Glissant* (2001), in which Claude Couffon has collected two conversations with Glissant. In these interviews, Glissant addressed the issue in a particularly frank, systematic and concise manner. In a second step, I will set the arguments advanced by Glissant in the larger context of Caribbean debates concerning the form of the sovereign nation-state and the necessity of carving out alternatives to it.

Glissant's Transition From Autonomism to Interdependentism

Asked by Couffon about his reaction to the decision by the de Gaulle government to turn Guadeloupe, Martinique and Guyana into French Departments in 1946, Glissant said that his response could be divided into three stages. These stages include, firstly, a rejection of the paradigm of political, economic and cultural assimilation to France and the paradigm of departmentalisation, secondly, the translation of these grievances into his commitment for the political autonomy of Martinique, and thirdly, an exploration of non-sovereign modes of politics that place greater emphasis on cultural collaboration in the Caribbean over an exclusive focus on the official status of the individual islands. In the following, I will outline the reasoning behind these different 'stages' in greater detail, with particular emphasis being placed on the last two.

The first stage of Glissant's response to the issue of Martinique's departmental status was characterised by what he called a *natural dissatisfaction* with French domination of Martinican culture and economy. Citing the personal experience of hunger and malnutrition under the Vichy occupation, Glissant felt at an early age that it was *unnatural* for an island of fisherman to not have

enough food to eat. Complicating this rejection, Glissant added that as French citizens, Martinicans gained a set of social benefits that need to be taken into consideration as well (48). While, on a superficial level, Glissant ascribed a certain contentment to Martinicans in terms of material security, from a 'consumerist point of view', he went on to hasten that this ability and willingness to consume took on extreme proportions. As a result of a historic trade-off between metropolitan France and their Departments, France continues to export its products to Martinique and pays Martinicans to buy them through social transfers.³²⁰ While, on the surface, this deal appears like a mutually beneficial arrangement, Glissant hastened, against the touristic image of a 'land of happiness' from a social point of view: “*Les Martiniquais sont souvent déséquilibrés, incertains, ambigus, furieux... Ils s'envirent de disputes – et les élections sont des événements terribles*”³²¹ (49). In sum, the line of criticism of Glissant levelled against the integration of Martinique into the French political community was based on a negative evaluation of the trade-off of material security for immaterial losses effecting the collective unconscious or what Glissant referred to as the mental balance (*équilibre*) of Martinicans. Glissant's engagement for the autonomy of the island, in the early 1960s in the form of the *Front des Antillais et Guyanais pour l'Autonomie* (FAGA), can be seen as the outcome of this problem analysis.

The political conflict between the project for Martinican autonomy launched by the FAGA and the de Gaulle government marked the second stage of Glissant's considerations on Martinique's official status. In the form of the double-negation with which I introduced the poet's politics at the onset of this thesis (1.0.) – Glissant emphasised that the FAGA was not a political party, but a “*front antillo-guyanais pour indépendance. Je ne suis pas un homme politique mais il y a des choses que je ne pouvais pas ne pas faire*”³²² (50).

To get a better sense of the FAGA's stance on the issue of national autonomy, one has to refer to the volume *Les Antilles et la Guyane à l'heure de la décolonisation* (1960), in which the speeches held at the three-day inaugural conference of the FAGA are collected. In the interview with Couffon, and elsewhere, Glissant did not elaborate on his participation in what Nesbitt considered the “the most radical statement of anticolonial Caribbean critique next to Fanon and Daniel Guerin” (2015, 136).³²³ The main political aim stated by the congress was the “struggle for

320 By paying functionaries 40 per cent plus the salaries paid in the French Hexagon and through social grants paid to the unemployed. The unemployment rate in Martinique was about 40 per cent at the time of the interview (Glissant and Couffon 2001, 49).

321 “Martinicans are often imbalanced, uncertain, ambiguous, furious... intoxicated with disputes – the elections are terrible events”, my translation.

322 “It was not a political party, it was a Antillean-Guyanese front for independence. I am not a politician but there are certain things I could not not do”, my translation.

323 The only publicly available copy of *Les Antilles et la Guyane à l'heure de la décolonisation* (1961) is in the library of the *Maison de l'Amérique latine* in Paris. The manifesto was written after a three-day conference headed by Glissant attended by 600 people. Nesbitt emphasises that the collection of speeches has never been closely analysed before due to its immediate ban upon publication (2013, 136).

the radical transformation of the political structures in our countries, in order to obtain their autonomy” (quoted in Nesbitt 2013, 136), as a necessary precondition for the exploration of a Caribbean federalism (138). The notion of nationhood and national unity proposed by the participants was an open one that acknowledged the creole nature of its diverse populations. The unity FAGA was trying to foster was cast as a unity based on the 'richness of particularities', one that is based on 'profound foundations' while it is capable of adapting to the modern world. In his own speech at the conference, Glissant's understanding of nations at times overlaps with that of cultures when he, for example, stated that 'there is no culture which is not first and fundamentally national', alluding to an understanding of a nation as not necessarily identical with a particular territory or political institution. As the title of the organisation suggests, the aim of the FAGA congress was mainly for the political autonomy of their islands. However, as several of the speakers, and Glissant among them, argued, autonomy and independence were not an end in themselves, but rather pre-requisites for entering into a political federation and bringing a self-sufficient and prospering local economy into being.

The awareness of the profound similarities among the Caribbean islands; of their shared histories as plantation colonies having undergone centuries of expropriation and domination is why Glissant considered the Caribbean a 'real whole' that needs to live together: “*pas seulement un coup de chapeau à un conformisme géographique, c'est constater que l'histoire et l'économie ont suivi dans ces pays la même courbe*”³²⁴ (LAGHD 29). Furthermore remarkable about the conference is that for several speakers, the call for autonomy did not rely on a radical cutting of ties with France. In a way that resembles a similar diplomatic stance as in his *Projet biologique* forty years later (3.2.4.), Glissant insisted, for example, that “*ce n'est pas parce que nous sommes contre le peuple français, mais parce que depuis des siècles les Antillais ne peuvent pas résoudre leurs propres problèmes, parce qu'il n'ont pas la libre disposition d'eux mêmes et nous pensons qu'il est capital qu'avant toute autre considération nous [...] prenions l'habitude de penser nos problèmes nous-mêmes*”³²⁵ (LAGHD 74-75). The overall tone of the propositions made at the congress was thus not one of militant rupture – and the ferocity with which the French state retaliated at independence movements undoubtedly played a role in this. As one of the speakers said: “there are no endless ways of decolonising, there is only one: to decolonise means to give and to let an oppressed people be in full control of its self”³²⁶ (LAGHD 7) – which also implies that political decolonisation could

324 “Not as a tip of the hat towards a geographic conformism, but to note that the history and the economies of these countries follows the same line”, my translation.

325 “not because we are against the French people. But because for centuries the Antilleans could not solve their own problems because they are not in full control of themselves. We think it is absolutely necessary for us to lead this struggle for us to develop the habit of thinking about our problems ourselves

326 “il n'y a pas une infinité de façons de décoloniser, il y'a en a qu'une: Décoloniser c'est-à-dire donner et laisser la libre disposition de soi à un peuple assujetti”, my translation.

only, realistically, be given or granted due to the extreme power asymmetry between mainland France and the Antillean islands.

Within the struggle for decolonisation, the FAGA perceived itself not as a revolutionary movement or as a political party in the making. The speakers shared a self-awareness that they were above all an expat community of intellectuals that were physically and socially removed from the actual ground of the struggle sparked by a spontaneous uprising on Martinique.³²⁷ While the FAGA did not trust the political system and therefore chose to operate outside of it, it tried to formulate political ideas that might spark a movement once they are taken up by the people at home. This gesture and self-positioning of the 'poet' via 'the people' can be identified in several of Glissant's discursive political interventions (see also 1.2.3.).

The third stage of his thinking about Martinique's neocolonial relation with France, which Glissant considered to be the 'most interesting', was marked by the following observation::

*“je me suis mis de plus en plus à penser et à défendre autour de moi qu'au fond le statut de la Martinique, de la Guyane et de la Guadeloupe n'était pas important. L'attachement à la France, unilatéral – c'était réellement un cordon ombilical – était tout à fait acceptable, dès l'instant où la Martinique s'insérait dans le contexte de la Caraïbe”*³²⁸ (Couffon and Glissant 2001, 50).

The acceptance of the official status of Martinique, Guyana and Guadeloupe as Departments appears like a drastic change from the struggle for autonomy. The conceptual shift this statement marks is one from a *formal* point of view regarding the set-up of political communities to a *relational* point of view. In other terms it could also be seen as a move from the conventional political realm into the cultural realm. What ended up being more important for Glissant, what he considered more *essential* than a formal associations to the French state, and the economic dependency that went along with it, was the necessity of Martinique to enter into the regional context of the Caribbean, in line with my arguments about the worldly movement from the island to the archipelago in the previous chapter. As he argued: *“Il y a là une force dynamique qui est beaucoup plus important que nos disputes politiques pour savoir s'il faut être départementaliste, autonomiste, indépendantiste”*³²⁹ (50). Citing the example of the Martinican football teams participation at a regional tournament under a Martinican, not the French, flag –, but also the realms of literature and music where the forces of creolisation are at play without being hindered by political borders (51), Glissant arrived at the conclusion that: *“Les vieilles querelles sur*

327 In 1959, a traffic accident between a white *pied noir* and black Martinican turned into a violent encounter, drawing a crowd of several hundreds that was violently dispersed by French riot police – resulting in three days of unrest in Fort-de-France, looting, and French gendarmes killing three young Martinicans (Bonilla 2015, 125).

328 “I increasingly began to think and to defend the idea around me that, at a fundamental level, the official status of Martinique, of Guyana and of Guadeloupe was not important. The unilateral attachment to France – it really was an umbilical cord – was altogether acceptable once Martinique would insert itself into the Caribbean context”, my translation.

329 “There is a dynamic force which is much more important than our political disputes about whether one should be a departmentalist, autonomist or independantist”, my translation.

*indépendance, l'autonomie et de la départementalisation me paraissent donc dépassés*³³⁰ (51). As I pointed out in chapter 3 with regards to Glissant's engagement for the *Pays biologique* (3.2.), the institutional-legal question were not altogether *dépassé* for Glissant, but they certainly moved into the background of his political concerns at times. In part this can also be attributed to the difficulty of institutionalising a Caribbean political federation (3.3.2.), a consideration that might also still fall under 'stage three'. Asked by Couffon about the prospects of such a federation, Glissant reiterated the line of thought which can also count as the main theme of *Le discours antillais*:

*“Je pense que c'est ce qui se produira à plus ou moins long terme; cela ne peut pas ne pas être. Mais sur le plan politique, c'est extrêmement difficile. Il y a des régimes tellement différents: le régime haïtien, le régime cubain, le régime jamaïcain et celui de Trinidad, des Antilles francophones qui sont des départements d'un pays appartenant à un autre continent... Tout cela pose des problèmes politique insolubles pour l'instant. Mais la réalité continue à dépasser tout cela”*³³¹ (51-52).

Formulated as another double-negation, Glissant here clearly asserted that, in the long run, a Caribbean political federation *cannot not* come into existence. In the meantime, while the 'politicians politics' (Rancière) is obstructing this political route, he cites the examples of 'slow political actors' (Dimock) who are already paving the way in that direction. Among them he referred to the *pacotilleuses*, informal female traders who create connections across the division of anglophone, francophone and hispanic islands through informal trade. Poets, as I have pointed out at the onset of this study, play a similar role for Glissant. *“Et nous, les écrivains, nous sommes les 'pacotilleurs' de notre pensée commune. C'est une belle image, parce que c'est celle d'une déplacement incessant qui ne se ferme ni ne se fixe nulle part, mais qui ne perd pas non plus sa propre spécificité”*³³² (53).

For the purpose of the ensuing study of Glissant's communities, the transition from a concern with concrete legal questions towards a stronger emphasis on the 'actual' (slow) cultural forces that can eventually lead to the formation of new political communities, as well as Glissant's insistence that a maintenance of a certain political arrangement does not have to categorically exclude the pursuit of other forms of community are particularly noteworthy. They are part of the reason why it is productive to consider Glissant's work on communities rather than a limited discussion of his political engagements with institutionalised political communities, such as the nation-state and the model of the Department. While the abandonment of the Martinican nationalist cause can be construed as defeatism, as argued by Peter Hallward (1.3.1.), Glissant's theoretical

330“The old quarrels about independence, autonomy and departmentalisation appear outdated to me“, my translation.

331“I think that is what is going to emerge more or less in the long term, it cannot not be. But on a political plane this is extremely difficult. There are different regimes: The Haitian regime, the Cuban regime, the Jamaican regime and that of Trinidad, and the Francophone Antilleans which are Departments of a country belonging to another continent... All of that poses political problems that cannot be solved at this moment. But the reality continues to exceed all of that“, my translation.

332“And us writers, we are the *pacotilleurs* of our common thought. It's a beautiful image, because it is one of an incessant displacement that does not close or fix itself anywhere, but which also does not lose its own specificity“, my translation.

transition from the promotion of autonomy to interdependence also refers to a move away from a binary logic of freedom/unfreedom to the exploration of more complex or multilayered political arrangements that are invested in creating a counter-balance to political arrangements of dependence by investing in a greater degree of autonomy in other spheres, such as what George Lamming referred to as the 'sovereignty of the imagination' (2002). The larger historical and regional context as well as the more concrete political implications of this shift warrant to be placed in the context of ongoing debates on alternative forms of political communities and non-sovereignty advanced, among others fields, by scholars in Caribbean and Indigenous studies.

The Case for Non-Sovereign Futures

Historically, the concept of sovereignty is intimately tied to the process through which colonial powers legitimised their projects of expansion, dispossession and extermination of Indigenous people by claiming that they were not 'fit to rule themselves' – an imperial strategy that is still being employed today. In conceptual terms, the case has, moreover, been made that the notion of the sovereign nation-state, as it is associated with the Westphalian system, constitutes a problematic export from the West and that, from a postcolonial perspective, alternative forms of political communities have to be explored.

In the Caribbean context, Yarimar Bonilla undertakes to respond to this challenge by studying the historic legacy of struggles for political autonomy and the complex results of these struggles in her book *Non-Sovereign Futures* (2015). By critically observing the ongoing normativity attached to independence in political discourse, Bonilla argues that a state of non-sovereignty is frequently associated with a sense of 'arrested development' or 'unachieved modernity'. Contrasting the view of non-sovereignty as an abnormality, she cautions that “the majority of Caribbean polities are non-sovereign societies; even those that have achieved 'flag independence' still struggle to forge a more robust project of self-determination” (xiii-xiv). In official political terms, the islands of the Caribbean fall under a plurality of political forms: territories, departments, protectorates, municipalities and commonwealths, belonging to overlapping zones of affiliation, such as the EU, the British Commonwealth of Nations, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands (6). This checkered political landscape clearly defies the prevalent conception of modern states as clearly bounded nations where land, people, and state overlap (6). While it is questionable whether a text book case of state sovereignty³³³ ever existed, and that various degrees of interdependences are an established part of geopolitical affairs today – Bonilla points out that sovereignty as an abstract political norm persists as a powerful discursive ideal, to which past and present Caribbean political movements have responded in significant ways.

³³³ Generally understood as “the right to own and control some area of the world [...], the idea of independent rule by a country or institution over a certain territory or set of political concerns” (Robertson 2002, 454).

Alternatives to the Nation-State Model in Afro-Caribbean Thought Past and Present

In a historic context of the second half of the 20th century Bonilla, for example, points out that at the time of decolonisation, various alternative political forms to the nation-state paradigm were seriously considered, such as the West Indies Federation and the United States of Africa, and that only following the waves of political independences in the 1960s was the nation-state paradigm asserted as a right and a historical stage for previously colonised people (3). In his book *Freedom Time – Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (2015) Gary Wilder interrogates this particular political moment, where an opportunity to imagine alternative institutional models outside the nation-state paradigm emerged and quickly subsided. Re-reading the historic decision by Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor to not advocate for independence and territorial sovereignty but for a “federation of federations within a larger [Francophone] confederation” (153), Wilder argues against the prevalent perception of Césaire and Senghor as “conservative stooges, dupes who unwittingly laid the groundwork for the French neocolonial project that, in the case of Africa, came to be famously known as *françafrique*” (Lambert 2016). For Wilder, Césaire and Senghor's political vision was utopian in that they believed in the potentials of 'decolonisation without the need for state sovereignty', based on a belief that “late imperialism had created conditions for new types of transcontinental political association” (2015, 13). The political federation they envisioned would consist of a compromise between the colonial metropole and their former colonial subjects, towards a protection and mutual sharing of the economic and political gains made by the French empire (14). “Proceeding from the insight that Africans and Antilleans were integral parts of the (imperial) nation, they refused to accept that 'France' referred to a metropolitan entity or a European ethnicity, rejecting the idea that they existed outside radical traditions of 'French' politics and thought” (18), and dreaming of a “multiethnic federation of over ten million citizens, of whom only four million would reside in the French mainland” (Bonilla 2015, 21). Bonilla concurs with Wilder's historicisation of Césaire's decision to turn Martinique from a colony into a French Department, contextualising it as “the logical outcome of a century-long quest to end Antilleans unequal inclusion” (20), and as comparable to the civil rights movement (21).

While Wilder's revisionist reading of Césaire and Senghor's politics is suggestive for its emphasis of the utopian, inclusive and cosmopolitan aspect of their vision, *Freedom Time* does not elaborate on the properly dissociative aspect of this political project, namely its rejection and active subversion of alternative utopian, inclusive and cosmopolitan projects formulated outside the French sphere of influence, as they have become associated with Kwame Nkrumah's dream of a United States of Africa (Amzat Boukari-Yabara, ch. 11), or the project of a Caribbean Federation to

which Glissant was committed (LDA). An additional blindspot in Wilder's celebration of non-sovereignty concerns the fact that, ten years after the policy of departmentalisation was institutionalised, Césaire admitted that the project had been naïve in its belief that it could bring about a greater degree of equality by keeping the structure of colonialism in place (24). Through the lens of this chapter, the question thus becomes *what other political forms of community could be envisioned after the idea of self-determination without sovereignty failed?* From a decolonial perspective, both Césaire and Senghor, in their capacities as French and Senegalese statesmen, did not produce alternative formal community projects and effectively assimilated to the French neocolonial project, thereby highlighting the danger of an uncritical celebration of non-sovereignty from a decolonial perspective.

As Bonilla points out, more than half a century after the struggle for greater autonomy by several islands had failed, sovereignty still remains an important discursive category, or what she calls a 'native category', a 'signpost for the relationships and institutions that shape daily life' more than a strict legal or political theoretical concept (2015, xi). For her, this is, for example, visible in the way a wide variety of socio-economic or cultural problems in several Caribbean societies are attributed to a sense of lacking sovereignty, even while the prospects for actual independence are not seriously considered (xiii). In this sense, she describes the political ambition of a third generation of activists – Césaire and Senghor representing the first, Glissant and Fanon the second – as the project of 'non-sovereign futures': “as an effort to break free from the epistemic binds of political modernity, even while still being compelled to think through its normative categories” (15). Whereas the first two generations still harboured the belief that colonialism could be overcome, “Today's activists inhabit a radically different landscape. They realize that political integration will not erase the disparities created by colonialism, but they do not share [the] belief in the possibility (or necessity) of independence” (19).

For her, this new mode of struggle became particularly apparent in the 2009 uprisings in Guadeloupe, which lasted for a period of 44 days and was supported by up to 100 000 people, a quarter of the island's population (1). As Raymond Gama, one of the spokespersons of the movement indicates, their goal was not independence, the seizure of state power or sovereignty: “(we) are currently in the process of creating new relationships. But we don't yet have the transcript of the future.... We are creating something that has already been promised but has never been seen. Only we can imagine it because we feel it, we live it, even if we don't have the concepts with which to define it...” (2-3). Putting greater focus on the actual, material and cultural, changes brought about by labour activism, such as large scale strikes or grassroots community initiatives, Bonilla makes the case that Guadeloupean activists explore forms of sovereignty outside traditional

channels of governance (38). In this sense, Bonilla's conceptualisation of non-sovereignty is, in part, reminiscent of Glissant's belief in the ability of cultural ties across the Caribbean to complement the imbalance produced by political and economic dependence on France, or George Lamming's 'the sovereignty of the imagination', as "the active will to refuse submission to the shibboleths that seek at every turn to inspire our self-contempt and our unthinking docility, and to command our understandings of, and our hopes for, what it might mean to live as a free community of valid persons" (2002, 74-75).³³⁴ In the context of the interest pursued in this chapter, I perceive these initiatives to point into a direction that is invested in the exploration of the pragmatic and political theoretical potential of alternative forms of different, and relatively small, communities in the 21st century. This, rather than the conventional discourse on dependence or independence, is the context in which I consider Glissant's own work on communities to be placed.

Section Summary

This section provided an overview of several historical and contemporary debates on the concept of community. The overview of both modern and postmodern conceptions has proven to be instructive in so far as it pointed out areas where Glissant's work on communities differs but also overlaps with these general philosophical currents. Delineating the differences between Glissant and Jean-Luc Nancy's work on communities was particularly productive in that it called for a close attention to the dynamics of inside/outside, openness/closure of the kind of communities I associate with Glissant's politics. In contrast to the categorical nature of Nancy's views on 'true communities' and his reluctance to associate communities with political work, it also became important to emphasise that Glissant's political practice warrants an openness to *all kinds of political practices* and thus *all kinds of communities*. As a result, the ensuing study is going to be susceptible to a variety of ways in which his work touched on different forms communities. A particular strength of Glissant's conception of communities thus promises to be its ability to deal with the inherent vagueness of the concept, particularly in terms of scale or size. The second sub-section emphasised that, instead of reading Glissant's communities against the conceptual background of conventional conceptions of nationalism or independence, are the ways in which his communities take on the kind of non-sovereignty I described in conversation with the work of Bonilla, Wilder and

³³⁴Outside the Caribbean context, similar attempts of working with sovereignty as a 'native category' can also be found in the work of scholars and activists working in the fields of Indigenous, Native Pacific, and Native American studies who acknowledge the problematic colonial history of sovereignty while still exploring its usefulness as a decolonial tool against Euro-American settler societies (Bartels et al 2019, 133). In addition to its strategic employment as a tool to stake claims for the redistribution of stolen land, intellectual and activist movements in this tradition are actively engaged in fostering alternative conceptions of the nation-state and European conceptions of sovereignty. The conception of political community formulated by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, for example, radically differs from the nation-state paradigm when she writes: "Our nation is a hub of Anishinaabe networks. It is a long kobade, cycling through time. It is a web of connections to each other, to the plant nations, the animal nations, the rivers and lakes, the cosmos and our neighbouring Indigenous nations" (2013a), or when she asserts that "Our diplomacy concerns itself with reconciliation, restitution, mediation, negotiation, and maintaining sacred and political alliances between peoples" (2013b).

Indigenous political thought are of greater interest. The work of this section has been helpful in that its conceptual and socio-historical grounding points out the general direction this chapter sets out to explore. In part mirroring the direction of Glissant's intellectual marronage into the world described in the previous chapter, the non-sovereign communities emerging from Glissant's work will first be described in the geographical context of the island and the archipelago (4.2.), and then in a more global context (4.3., 4.4.).

4.2. From Dream Countries to Real Countries – The Island and the Archipelago as Community Models

“There is an Indies which finishes when reality brushes its arduous hair; a land of dream.

It accepts what comes, suffering or joy, which is multiplicitious on the clay,

(Halfway between each of the races, mixing them).

From the dream described there, a high ground has come forth,

which must be described.“

– Édouard Glissant, *The Indies* (CP 95)

Glissant's fictional work is filled with communities. From the group of friends and activists in *La Lézarde* (1958), the slave and maroon communities in *Le quatrième siècle* (1964), *Mahagony* (1987) and *Ormerod* (2004), the intergenerational communities of the Béluse, Longoué, Celat and Targin families or the imaginary Batouto people whose story is told in *Sartorius* (1999). Glissant's literary representation of these communities has already been the focus of several studies. For the most part, the main interest in these studies has been whether Glissant depicted particular communities in a positive or negative light, in conservative or emancipatory ways, or in a realistic or unrealistic fashion (see for example Britton 2008, Hiddleston 2005, Burton 1997). In my investigation of Glissant's 'strategy of creating communities', my interest in this section differs from these studies in so far as it is concerned with the ways in which Glissant sought to create communities by connecting different modes of political work. By focussing on how Glissant engaged with the problem of community on the conceptual and geographical levels of the island and the archipelago, I will pay particular attention to how he sought to connect the fictional with the non-fictional realm by interrogating, once more, *Le quatrième siècle* (1964) and *Ormerod* (2003), as well as *La Lézarde* (1958). As will become apparent, a clear distinction between these forms of political engagement or creation cannot be upheld.

The direction of flight this chapter traces is one from individual isolation or solitude to a new sense of community. In my study of how this movement is performed within and across Glissant's literary work, I will claim that this direction of flight is performed at the level of both content and form. With regards to the content of the two novels, the depiction of fictional characters and the different kinds of communities to which they belong is of importance, the first sub-section is devoted to a study of this aspect (4.2.1.). The second sub-section (4.2.2.) looks more closely at a set of literary techniques Glissant employed in his novels, such as changes in narrating voices. The second part of this work, will moreover address the question how Glissant's general style of writing can be seen as invested in a specific community building project that could be cast as a 'stylistic

marronage'. Broadly framed in terms of the guiding questions of this chapter, the first sub-section addresses the question of *who* belongs to particular communities and *how* they are depicted, whereas the second and third sub-section deals with the question of *how* the move from fictional to non-fictional or extra-textual communities is performed.

4.2.1. There Are No Maroons Without Slaves – Individuals and Communities in Glissant's Fictional Oeuvre

The ensuing sub-section presents a reading of the presences (and absences) of communities in Glissant's fictional oeuvre by beginning from arguably their smallest unit, namely the relations between individual characters. The line that I am proposing to trace from these individual characters is towards a reconsideration of the types of communities that could be imagined more abstractly, and in larger collectives, on the level of the island and the archipelago. By proceeding from individual characters and the small communities or groups they foster, be it through friendship, love or strategic political alliances, this kind of approach is particularly adapt at exploring the kind of structural analogies between small and big communities, which Rosa et al. identify as a productive field of enquiry in the realm of theoretical engagements with communities (2010, 177). Branching out from an interrogation of the interpersonal relations in Glissant's fiction, this sub-section also addresses the question of how Glissant presented larger groups or collectives in his novels, especially with regards to the social categories of coloniser and colonised, maroons and slaves established and maintained by the colonial project.

The Individualist Focus in Glissant's Fictional Work

In *Le quatrième siècle*, as in most of Glissant's fiction, the characters on the various layers of narration appear through the perspective of a largely unspecified external narrator and only occasional insights into their thought processes are provided. The presentation of the interactions and conversations between characters thus makes up most of the overall narration. Apart from instances where the narrator presents the inner thoughts of protagonists, the narrator's knowledge of the characters' inner workings is limited to feelings and intentions that could be deduced through observation. Apart from specific moments, where the narrative voice changes into a first person narrator, or where the narrator's identity becomes specified, on the part of the reader this style of writing provokes a distance to the characters that could be attributed to what Glissant's claimed to be the 'right to opacity'. As pointed out before (3.2., 3.3.), the characters belonging to the families of the Longoué and Béluse appear to be neither modelled on specific historical cases, nor is there an effort to make their personalities appear 'round' or 'realistic' with the aim that readers could either identify with them or believe the narrative to be true. To the contrary, the frequent references to their 'primordial status' of the first ancestors of the Béluse and Longoué, for instance, lends itself

to allegoric interpretations more than 'real' human beings with complex personalities. For the reader, this style of narration contributes to a sense of being presented with a variety of individuals appearing and disappearing on a shared literary stage, their distance to the reader remaining as constant as the action unfolding for an audience of a classical theatre play. Remarkable about Glissant's depiction of individuals and social groups in *Le quatrième siècle* is furthermore that they are hardly ever referred to collectively. Instead, the focus rests on the individual trajectories and fates of characters. While this mode of narration could, in part, be attributed to the historical non-existence of communities of slaves and maroons, which would be in line with Glissant's arguments in *Le discours antillais* (see 2.2.3.), this highly singularised focus also, crucially, avoids reproducing established generalisations and segregations between social groups, while instead privileging a rendition of the complexities and entanglements between the novel's protagonists. As *Le quatrième siècle* demonstrates, a particular quality of the realm of fiction lies in its ability to free the reader's imaginary from them, whereas sociological discourse inevitably re-produces established social concepts, albeit critically.

From Isolation to Small Alliances – The Partnerships Between Longoué and Louise, Mathieu and Mycéa

As a corresponding dimension to the prevailing sense of spatial confinement analysed in 3.1., the opening scenes of *Le quatrième siècle* depict the first ancestors of the Longoué and Béluse in their respective enclosures: Longoué in his maroon hide-out in the forest, Béluse in front of his hut on the plantation. Both appear to be in complete isolation. This isolation and the anxiety and hyper-awareness that accompanies it is the result of the slave trade and the strategy of violently separating families and communities during the crossing of the Atlantic, so as to avoid the organisation of resistance among the captives. This isolation is thus not natural or the expression of a personal preference, but the immediate outcome of a monumental human catastrophe. The solitude of the first Longoué ends when he returns to the plantation and liberates Louise from the cross on which she was bound as punishment for having enabled his escape. In their first interaction, Longoué speaks to her in a language she does not understand, but she hears him out nevertheless (LQS 91). Longoué subsequently learns her adopted language, the local creole, while she chooses not to learn his 'African language' (LQS 95). Although this is not made explicit in the narrative itself, the repetition of similar constellations of language-learning hints at both, the respect of the other's opacity as cultural imperative in a multilingual context, as well as the political implications of this stance as a pre-requisite for the creation of new kinds of communities in Glissant's oeuvre. Instead of being referred to as an obstacle to communication or rejection of the other's way of being, Louise's insistence on not learning Longoué's language is described as contributing to a certain

'balance' between the couple as they turn into the 'owners of the woods' and eventually control the 'centre of life on the hill', from which they organise raids of plantations (LQS 95). The significance of the union between them as a first step out of the complete isolation with which the novel began, and a step towards the imagination of a future community, is further emphasised when the couple dies at the same point in time in the story, a literary decision I have previously mentioned with regards to Glissant's method of historiography (2.2.2.). The significance of the union between Longoué and Louise, as a nucleus for a new community, is also underlined by a host of other couples populating the novel both among and across maroons and slaves, as well as among the colonisers.

Above all, the marriage between Mathieu and Mycéa marks the beginning of a new era for a community this union brings into being. In *Le quatrième siècle*, Mycéa's family lineage appears from the margins of the central dynamic between Longoué and Béluse. Mycéa can thus be seen as marking the beginning of a generation that is no longer defined by the social divisions invented by the colonial system. Out of the relationship between Mathieu and Mycéa, the novel suggests, a new community will emerge that not only takes on a biological form in their children, but also spiritual or fictional offspring. The latter is alluded to when Mathieu takes over from Longoué as *quimboiseur* in *Le quatrième siècle* and subsequently becomes the narrator of several of Glissant's subsequent novels and essays (for more on his character see chapter 3.3.). More than signalling the union between 'the poet' and 'the muse' in Greek mythology, the partnership between Mathieu and Mycéa, appears to mark the break from biological filiation to spiritual relation. The validity of reading the implications of the union between the two in this manner is confirmed in *La Lézarde*, whose narratives succeed *Le quatrième siècle* in chronological terms. At the level of the content as well as in the structure of the novel, the realisation of the union between Mycéa and Mathieu is directly associated with the political events leading to the first free elections resulting in the decolonisation of the island and, in turn, the possibility of the emergence of a Martinican political community.

Whereas the central dynamic driving the different narratives in *Le quatrième siècle* are the changing constellations of couples – love relationships (Louise-Longoué), rivalries (Longoué-Béluse), friendships (La Roche and Senglis) and partnerships (Melchior-La Roche) –, communities remain but a vaguely hinted at future possibility. As for the actual collectives or groups featuring in the novel, the narrators divulge no details concerning their internal set-up. Neither how the maroons led by Longoué and Louise maintain or grow their group is specified, nor how they organise political decision-making processes. What is insinuated, however, is that it grew through infrequent defections from the plantation and that it was ruled according to a clear hierarchy based on the

authority of Longoué who possesses both the necessary military skills as well as the capacity as a healer through his extensive knowledge of herbal plants. In contrast to the sociologic categories introduced in 2.1.2., Glissant did not contrast different forms of marronage in *Le quatrième siècle*. Instead, the practice of flight from the plantation, as performed by the Longoué family, appears in the form of an archetypical phenomenon, in which all types of marronage are contained: *petit*, *grand*, occasional, collective and sovereign marronage. With the solidarities and modes of communities among both maroons and *béké* remaining largely invisible in *Le quatrième siècle*, the only community the novel does allude to, albeit indirectly, is one that would comprise all of these different constituencies. *La Lézarde* carries this vision further and moves it onto the realm of institutional legal questions concerning the political status of Martinique. In *Le quatrième siècle*, the time does not yet appear to be ripe for these kind of questions. The essential entanglements and mutual dependencies that would eventually give rise to a shared community defined by the boundaries of the island – one comprised of maroons, slaves and colonisers alike – are, however, clearly marked in the course of several meetings between the maroon Longoué and the slave owner La Roche, to which I will turn in the following.

Inventing the People that is Missing – Le quatrième siècle's Vision of a Community Comprising Coloniser and Colonised

The dynamic between individuals, which I have sketched in the previous sub-section, can be further extended when the larger dynamic between collectives in *Le quatrième siècle* is taken into consideration. As I will show, this dynamic is essentially aiming at overcoming social binaries towards the exploration of an altogether new form of a postcolonial political community. The world in which Glissant's fictional characters find themselves in at the beginning of the novel is essentially Manichean in nature. Contrasting the fate of two families of maroons and slaves, their antagonism remains the driving force of the plot. This is not only made evident by the fact that the conversation between Mathieu Béluse and Papa Longoué, located at the foreground of the multiple narratives contained in the novel, is shaped by Mathieu's initial sense of pride in his Béluse identity. It is also emphasised in stylistic terms by the way the first ancestors of the Béluse and Longoué refer to each other as *l'autre* (the Other) in italics (LQS 61, 66, 71, 96). Although Papa Longoué briefly alludes to an unknown conflict, an initial act of betrayal, that might have occurred between them in the 'land-before', the origins of the opposition between the two remains unknown. Despite their spatial separation, the ancestors of the Longoué and Béluse are too closely related to 'delink' or free themselves of the obsession with one another's presence. Longoué's obsession with his slave antagonist takes the form of repeated attempts to scare and eventually kill him, by first leaving warning signs (LQS 29, 54, 99), and then a poisonous snake in his hut, which Béluse manages to

kill in time (LQS 71). Their competition is not only depicted as being of a fundamental and lethal kind – as is evident from the fight that breaks out once they disembark from the boat (LQS 28) – it also appears as a self-destructive substitute act, a misdirected hatred that ignores the presence of the slave traders and owners, the actual enemies of the enslaved. In response to Papa Longoué's account of the meeting of the first Longoué and Béluse, Mathieu remarks that their ancestors simply imitated the rivalry between their colonisers, as a kind of substitute act in place of an actual resistance against their common enemy: *“ils n'avaient fait qu'hériter cela aussi, et encore du premier coup, le premier jour, comme ils le feraient tous par la suite dans ce pays, recevant la misère et la joie, et la haine et l'amour, pour un tel et contre tel, au gré de leurs possesseurs, sans rien construire par eux-mêmes”*³³⁵ (LQS 31)

By bringing the stories of the Longoué and Béluse into opposition and levelling the ground between the two, Glissant appears to make a conceptual point, more so than remaining true to any historical record or to either side of the conflict. The figurative nature of these two families is also emphasised in the way *Le quatrième siècle* associates different 'inherent character traits' to maroons and slaves encapsulated in the general formula of 'those who resisted' and 'those who accepted' (LQS 57). This general translation of the political stance of slaves and maroons towards the plantation system, is however increasingly problematised by the narratives. The fact that neither maroons nor slaves can be considered to be morally superior, but that they are in fact dependent on one another, is for example highlighted in a scene that depicts a slave revolt, in the course of which several slaves escape to the hills from the Senglis plantation on which Mathieu Béluse lives. Instead of fleeing, Béluse returns to the plantation and takes up his work. Longoué's lack of understanding for Béluse's decision not to flee into the hills, is commented on by the narrator, whose identity remains obscure, in the following terms: *“Pourquoi ne marronnaient-ils pas tous? Il ne savait pas ce que leur lutte et leur souffrance avaient d'utile. Il ne comprenait pas que tout la masse n'aurait pu monter. La forêt n'eût pas suffi à les abriter, encore moins à les nourrir”*³³⁶ (LQS 115).

This part emphasises a crucial aspect of Glissant's conception of marronage, namely that it does not include a hierarchy between maroons and slaves but perceives these positionalities as two complementing strategies of resistance. Glissant expressed this perspective in conversation with Chamoiseau in the following manner:

“Et bien entendu la famille de marron voit les chose d'une autre manier que la famille des esclaves. Mais je dis dans Le quatrième siècle qu'il n'y a pas supériorité d'un sur l'autre. C'est à dire que la

335 “They just adopted it as well, from the very first day, the same way they would all do in this country, by assuming the joy, the pain, the love and the hatred for or against this or that one, depending on the will of their masters, without every creating anything themselves”, my translation.

336 “Why did they not all maroon into the hills? He did not know what was important in their fight and their suffering. He didn't realize that they could not all climb onto the morne. The forest could not hide, nor feed all of them. He did not know that he was protected by their pain and suffering”, my translation.

*souffrance des esclaves sur les plantations est aussi nécessaire que l'orgueil, la fierté et la résistance des marrons sur les hauteurs et dans les bois. L'important c'est de trouver notre propre trace et notre propre manière de fréquenter le monde*³³⁷ (Christiani 1993).

Increasingly forced to overcome their essentialised opposition to one another in the course of the novel, both maroons and slaves end up having to acknowledge the relevance and braveness of the other in the struggle against the colonial project, with neither of them being able to win the battle between them. As the narratives proceed, their actions are thus increasingly depicted in a complementary fashion. Whereas the first Longoué, for instance, ends up 'ruling over the hills', the first Béluse effectively takes over the Senglis plantation once Senglis' wife passes away (LQS 112-13). As the narrative proceeds, it therefore becomes clearer that they both work and *resist* against the plantation system, *the one from within* and *the other from without*.

Whereas the first ancestors of the Longoué and Béluse do not meet each other again after they disembark from the slave ship, their antagonism thus remaining unresolved, the trajectories of their descendants intersect more frequently. The growing entanglements between the two families is primarily attributed to decisions made by women and children of the respective families, who choose not to entertain or inherit the 'hatred' harboured by their men and fathers and the 'curse' separating the families along with it (LQS 134). Beginning with the emergence of friendships across the maroon-slave divide in the second generation, the differences between the two social groups no longer appear insurmountable, but reappear in a series of harmonious encounters and violent clashes between family members over the course of several generations.

While the binary between maroons and slaves increasingly blurs over the course of the two generations, it eventually breaks down completely when Mathieu, a descendant of the Béluse, takes over the role as *quimboiseur* from Papa Longoué, embodying the metaphysical force of the two family lineages that have worked against the plantation system from within and outside in complementary fashion (LQS 57). The mixing of the two qualities is described in the following terms: “*les Béluse et les Longoué s'étaient en quelque sorte ralliés dans un même vent, avec une furie d'abord venue des Longoué, une force, mais qui s'était enracinée dans l'incroyable patience Béluse*”³³⁸ (LQS 18). Papa Longoué accords Mathieu the mission to unify the two traditions and to re-create the connection with the 'land-before', whose forgotten memory was the driving factor of *Le quatrième siècle*: “*qu'un jour un Béluse viendrai rendre compte (un enfant) de l'ancienne trahison là au delà des eaux, pour qu'enfin les deux côtes se rejoignent par-dessus la tempête? Par-*

337“The maroon family certainly perceives things differently than the slave family. But I am saying in *Le quatrième siècle* that there is no superiority of one over the other. That means that the slave's suffering on the plantation is just as necessary as the pride, the vanity and resistance of the maroon on the hills and in the forest. What is important is to find one's own path and one's way of frequenting the world”, my translation.

338“The Béluse and Longoué were united by the wind, in an anger and a force coming from the Longoué first, then taking root in the unimaginable patience of the Béluse”, my translation.

*dessus la honte de l'oubli?*³³⁹ (LQS 44).

In a final symbolic transformation of the vocations of refusal and acceptance, the young Mathieu enacts his first *refusal* at the age of nine in a flash-back scene towards the end of the novel, in which he *refuses* his mother's request to visit Papa Longoué, to collect medicines for his ailing sister (LQS 251). Once Mathieu sees the hill on which Papa Longoué's house is situated, he perceives its 'stillness and patience' (LQS 254) to be opposed to his own nature, indicating that he is no longer a 'real' Béluse but has already taken on certain Longoué character traits. This *métissage* of character traits which, *Le quatrième siècle* metaphorically associates with maroons and slaves, is complete when Mathieu, Mycéa and Thaël emerge towards the end of the novel as adolescents in whom the 'vertigo' and 'impatience' of the Béluse and the Longoués' 'fearlessness', 'stubbornness' and 'vocation to action' live on (LQS 284). The opposition between maroons and slaves have, at this point, altogether dissolved into a shared heritage of decolonial struggle.

The complication of the relationship between the Béluse and Longoué is central to *Le quatrième siècle*, but the opposition between slaves and maroons is not the only opposition that blurs, or is at least troubled. Bearing in mind Glissant's vocation to re-create a new founding myth for the Caribbean and the people of the Tout-Monde, the key point of this arrangement of individuals and their relations to one another appears to be that they all form part of a shared history. As long as aspects of this history are being cut-off or considered as less important than others, the cultural balance which Glissant perceived to be lacking in the societies of the Antillean will remain absent.

No Coloniser Without Colonised

In *Le quatrième siècle*, the confrontation between colonisers and colonised is also portrayed as a complex entanglement where a clean separation between 'good' and 'bad' actors, oppressor and oppressed, dominant and subordinate forces becomes increasingly difficult to draw. The two slave owners La Roche and Senglis are for example portrayed as vastly different personalities, and their plantations as being organised according to different degrees of violence, exploitation and profit-maximisation. Whereas the Senglis plantation is depicted as 'a site of decay' and as being opposed to the 'race for the accumulation of wealth', the La Roche plantation *L'Acajou* is described as a “*une ruche et par conséquent un lieu de damnation pour les esclaves. De damnation physique et terrifiante, quand chez Senglis, et jusqu'aux volontés, tout se décomposait dans l'avili et l'indigne*”³⁴⁰ (LQS 101). The structural difference between the two plantations is also reflected in the different personalities of Senglis, who appears as hesitant and submissive towards his wife,

³³⁹“that one day a Béluse (a child) would come to account for the betrayal across the waters, so that both coasts could reunite across the storms? Beyond the shame of forgetting?”, my translation.

³⁴⁰“a beehive, a place of damnation for slaves, a physically terrifying damnation, when at Senglis, everything was decomposed, debased and unworthy, even the will”, my translation.

whereas La Roche embodies recklessness and greed.

As much as *Le quatrième siècle* unsettles the cliché of the 'evil coloniser', instead portraying both Senglis and La Roche as being overdetermined by the logic of the plantation system which they serve, the power hierarchy between maroons and colonisers, which is usually described in terms of material superiority and inferiority, is also troubled. In a scene in which the first Longoué enters the plantation at night to capture Louise, the slave who had liberated him, he watches over the sleeping La Roche, who had chased him relentlessly into the hills:

“Le couteau à la main, la tête vide et brûlante, il ne pensait même pas à tuer cet homme qu’il avait marqué du signe: peut-être parce que le seul sentiment qui lui vint fut vaguement qu’un tel homme était bien peu avisé de laisser ainsi ouvertes les portes de sa maison, quand il régnait sur un tel nombre d’esclaves(que cette imprudence, cette folie avaient quelque chose de l’innocence, qui est la souche de la sagesse ou de la bravoure, et dont il ne fallait pas profiter) ou peut-être parce qu’il savait déjà que l’homme ne devait mourir qu’à l’endroit où le signe l’avait pour la première et irrémédiable fois marqué”³⁴¹ (LQS 87).

This scene is not only significant in that it shows the vulnerability of the slave master, who is at the mercy of the maroon. It also reveals the complex combination of arrogance, ignorance, carelessness, bravery and madness on which the plantation system was erected and maintained, and which allows La Roche to sleep in peace. In its hesitant interpretation of the action in the scene ('perhaps'), and its inability or unwillingness to enter the mind of the maroon, the narrative voice also ascribes several emotions and considerations to the maroon that range from compassion, to care and to an ability to foresee what kind of death would be appropriate for this slave owner. As the narrative reveals towards the very end of the novel, the place where La Roche is supposed to die, is a clandestine slave boat that La Roche boards after the slave trade has already been abolished (LQS 184-85). As foretold by the first Longoué, he never returns from it. The disappearance of the character who embodies the role of the slave master implies both the end of the colonial project as well as the opposite: its hidden continuation. The fact that his body is not found could just as well mean that he has transformed and lives on in a different guise.

In Glissant's fictional account of the age of marronage in *Le quatrième siècle*, an age that comes to an end with the death of the last member of the Longoué family in 1946, the experience of maroons and slaves both provide an archive of political strategies that can be referred to as a shared history of an emerging community. The character traits associated with the political strategies of maroons, slaves and *békés* – some healthy (wisdom/silence), some dangerous (imbalance/madness) – form the cultural legacy that makes up the social fabric of Martinique and could inform a sense of

341 “Knife in hand, with an empty and burning head he did not even think of killing this man, who he once marked with the sign: Maybe because his only feeling was that such a man, who had that many slaves, was ill advised to leave his door wide open (This carelessness, this madness had something of an innocence, the root of a kind of wisdom and bravery that one does not abuse) or maybe because he knew that this man was only destined to die where the sign marked him once and for all”, my translation.

belonging and pride in a long fought struggle against domination. And although, as emphasised above, the narrator insists that there can be no maroons without slaves, and that their anticolonial resistance has to be seen as *different yet equal*, the maroon heritage occupies a privileged ground in that it is Papa Longoué's authority that is being passed on to the young Mathieu. Instead of suggesting the end of the genealogy of the Longoué as a failure to maintain the biological lineage of the maroons, the novel emphasises how the legacy of marronage lives on through relation, not filiation, as the legacy of historical knowledge, knowledge of the landscape and its different herbs and plants. It also forms part of the legacy of the maroons, of those who refused to be dominated, and exploited, who created a world of their own, shaped by material destituteness but a greater degree of freedom, the freedom to create one's own names, and to grow roots in the new landscape.³⁴²

“Come With Me!” Flore Gaillard and Maroon Communities in Ormerod

As Glissant pointed out in *Ormerod*, published almost half a century after *La Lézarde* and *Le quatrième siècle*, this community does not have to be projected into a utopian future. One could, just as well, move further into the past (chapter 2), or from one island to the next (chapter 3), to encounter the possibility of a Pan-Caribbean community in the form of a maroon gang on Saint Lucia. In *Ormerod*, it is once again a couple, Nestor'o and Evora, that serves as the driving force behind a variety of different narratives included in the novel. Their love for one another is the cause and centre of the Pan-Caribbean wedding scene mentioned in the previous chapter (3.1.2.). Surrounded by their friends and family, they are no longer isolated in the manner of the main characters in *Le quatrième siècle*. They belong to several overlapping communities, coming from different islands, different nationalities and social classes, that are united in their diversity.

The same could be said about the character Flore Gaillard, whose trajectory is revealed in *Ormerod* alternately to the evolving relationship between Nestor'o and Evora. Although a romantic relation between Gaillard and two of her men, Alvares and Mantenayo, is being alluded to, this love triangle does not move into the foreground of the plot. Instead, her story is more directly concerned with her solitude as the leader of the *Brigands*, and the internal dynamics in this small community of maroon guerillas. By focussing on the latter aspect, Glissant's fictional treatment of the internal make-up of maroon communities gains in specificity when compared to the abstract depiction of the maroon collective led by Longoué and Louise in *Le quatrième siècle*. When she is first introduced, Flore Gaillard's main ambition is revenge for the suffering she had to endure on the Lovenblade

³⁴²The complication of the opposition between colonised and coloniser is also a central theme in Glissant's novel *La Lézarde* (1958). It is above all depicted in the form of a long walk Thaël and Garin, who is identified by the group around Mathieu as a colonial traitor, take down the river to the ocean. What is at first announced as an execution turns into a long procession of solidarity and brotherhood. Once Thaël announces his intention to kill Garin the two are no longer described as individuals or enemies fighting out a battle of life and death but increasingly merge into a single character.

plantation. The brutality with which the plantation raids carried out by her *Brigands* are depicted appears to glorify violence and revenge in an exaggerated way that does not shy away from relying on stereotypical portrayals of military combat in action films (OD 28). The explicitness with which the decolonial violence performed by the *Brigands* is described, is moreover remarkable in that it appears in stark contrast to the generally detached style of narration Glissant employs in the rest of the novel. For readers who identify with Gaillard's cause, and the suffering she endures, the extreme violence enacted by her troops might evoke a response that is at the same time gratifying as it is repelling. In that sense, Glissant's depictions of the plantation raids, again, seem to evoke the impression that the execution of the coloniser in blind rage is not a compelling answer to the violence upheld by the plantation system.

Moreover, Flore Gaillard's political project turns out not being limited to revenge. As her war-cry “*viens avec moi!*” (come with me!) indicates – which her group reiterates in various Creole variations (“*vini épi moin, vini-ek moin, vini avè moin, vinn av moué, come ep mi, vinn with mo...*”, OD 24) –, the aim of the *Brigands* is not a destructive one, but essentially aims at creating a community of freed slaves behind or around Flore Gaillard's leadership. In terms of the categories introduced in 2.1.2. Gaillard's individual act of *petit marronage* attracted a small group of followers, resulting in a *grand* or collective marronage which, as the narrative proceeds, aims at taking on the form of sovereign marronage when Gaillard discloses that her ultimate goal is to take control of the whole island (OD 114). While Gaillard's individual flight and her recruitment of fellow gang members somewhat resembles the flight of the first Longoué in *Le quatrième siècle*, the two differ significantly. Whereas the first Longoué was obsessed with his antagonists, the slave (Béluse) and the slave master (La Roche), Gaillard's vision extends further. As she reveals in a conversation with Alvares, who decides to leave the *Brigands*, she perceives her struggle to form part of a larger project of black liberation, from which she cannot divorce herself as easily as Alvares who has a French-Cuban background:

“*vous êtes un homme qui discourt aussi bien qu'il agit, mais vous dites la race mais nous autres, les nègres somme d'aucune race, nous somme les nègres tout simplement nous n'entrons pas dans la catégorie des races nous sommes des bêtes à exploiter, des bêtes à libérer [...] vous ne pouvez pas quitter ma solitude, vous partirez je resterai, attendant quoi je le sais déjà, car si votre ignorance de l'avenir est votre liberté, ma science de l'avenir est ma prison*”³⁴³ (OD 227).

This passage is outstanding because Glissant here deliberately ascribes a 'black consciousness' to Flore Gaillard in her assertion “*nous somme les nègres tout simplement*”, which is

343 “you are a man who talks as well as he acts, but you when you speak of race, we, the negroes, are of no race, we are simply negroes, we do not fall into any category of race. We are beasts to exploit, animals to be freed [...] you cannot leave my solitude, you will leave, I will stay, waiting for what I already know, because if your ignorance of the future is your freedom, my science of the future is my prison”, my translation.

directly associated with her sense of confinement or solitude. Instead of limiting the movement of the *Brigands* to the island of Saint-Lucia, Glissant associates their grand marronage with a movement of resistance that, as pointed out in 1.4.3, can be considered as a continent-wide movement and as *total* in its resistance to the plantation system. Instead of being satisfied with gaining control of the island (*sovereign marronage*), Gaillard's political goal is thus associated with the liberation of black people from a racist superstructure, that works on the combined logic of culture, biology and economy. As much as Gaillard is aware that her struggle runs up against a white system of oppression, she is hesitant to ascribe to any essentialist notion of blackness, as upheld by conservative interpretations of the Négritude philosophy. As part of the previous quotation, Gaillard continues to say to Alvares:

“dans l'avenir il viendra un moment où nous n'aurons plus besoin de dire que nous sommes des nègres nous le serons simplement et même nous pourrions choisir de ne pas l'être, ce sera notre liberté Alvares, et vous voyez que depuis toujours je suis vous ne pouvez pas savoir combien seule nous sommes seules, vous ne pouvez pas quitter ma solitude, vous partirez je resterai, attendant quoi je le sais déjà”³⁴⁴
(OD 227).

Flore Gaillard's sense of solitude, which she again attributes in part to her confinement to the racial category of *nègre*, increases as the narrative progresses. It eventually distances her from the group and draws her into nature, into the '*impenetrable*' vegetation of the forests (OD 58).³⁴⁵ The impenetrability of the forest, which is a repeated notion in Glissant's fiction, alludes both to a sense of relative safety from the plantation where rape of female slaves was systematically employed as a tool of oppression. It also alludes to a move of the individual from transparency and high visibility into an opaque realm, where it becomes increasingly difficult for one's sense of self to be understood, or 'grasped' by others, in Glissant's aforementioned twist on the French verb *comprendre*. At the point in *Ormerod*, where Flore Gaillard retreats into her solitude, the *Brigands* have already disintegrated and are scattered across Saint-Lucia's neighbouring islands. Her disappearance is complete when she is betrayed by one of her men and executed, her body evaporating into air, signalling her 'merging' with nature, as mentioned in the previous chapter in relation to Mycéa's ecological turn (3.2.3).

As shown in the previous chapter, the claim that the *Brigands* guerrilla gang is above all shaped by its diverse make-up, Gaillard's unquestioned leadership, and her decision to remain on the move and to not settle (OD 180). The *Brigands*' perpetual state of 'being on the move' is what

³⁴⁴“in the future there will come a time when we will no longer need to say that we are negroes, we will simply be negroes and can even choose not to be negroes, it will be our freedom Alvares. And you see, for forever I have been you cannot know how alone we are alone, you cannot leave my loneliness, you will leave I will stay, waiting for what I already know“, my translation.

³⁴⁵“Flore Gaillard partait de plus en plus souvent, sans rien démettre de ses devoirs, dans la solitude du Bois et la fréquentation des fourmis. Un jour elle s'aperçut brusquement qu'elle sentait ce qui émanait de la forêt” (Flore Gaillard escaped more and more often, without resigning from her duties, into the solitude of the forest and the ants. One day she suddenly noticed that she felt what was emanating from the forest“ (OD 229).

makes them a difficult target for attacks by the enemy, but also what constitutes their greatest weakness and eventually contributes to their dissolution. Other maroon communities that are mentioned in the narrative are said to be better organised than the *Brigands*. They have their own decision-making platforms and can accommodate a significant number of members. In contrast to these communities, Flore Gaillard's strategy begins to appear less convincing for several members of her group. The disintegration of the *Brigands* is thus in part attributed to the uncompromising militancy of her overall military strategy, which eventually takes its toll on the physical and mental health of the *Brigands* and results in a series of personal challenges and conflicts: Gaillard suffers from insomnia, Alvares and Gros-Zinc from dementia, Makondji from jealousy (OD 91).

Mantenayo in particular, who also works as Gaillard's military advisor, is impressed by the fact that the social systems of the other maroon societies have lasted more than twenty years, and that they are highly mobile which allows them to travel to different plantations and to other islands. In admiration of their ability to 'bury slavery', to 'kick it with their feet', he reproaches that these '*Marrons*', deliberately written with a capital M, have managed to liberate themselves from the plantation system by settling down to a larger extent than Flore Gaillard was able to as a result of her ambition of gaining complete control over the island. As Mantenayo says, "*regardez les Marrons, chacun d'eux a enterré la désolation et l'esclavage devant sa case et ils les foulent aux pieds chaque jour en entrant et sortant, ils m'ont appris cela...*"³⁴⁶ (OD 180).

Manetayo's subsequent departure from the *Brigands* signals the end of the group and the increasing isolation of Flore Gaillard. She eventually tells her soldiers that they are free to leave before signing a peace treaty with France and retreating into the forest. Makondji, one of her best soldiers, hands her over to the British in return for a large sum of money (OD 299). Whereas the *Brigands* could, in summary, be said to fail at creating a permanent community, instead remaining a loose assembly of guerillas formed around the lone authority of Flore Gaillard, these other cases of *grand* or 'collective marronage' in fact constitute lasting communities that are described as taking the form of "*mi-familiale et mi-tribale*" (half family, half tribe) (OD 115), an organisational form in part attributed to their ability to attribute names to themselves. The failure of Flore Gaillard's political project to rule over the whole island, is thus contrasted by the relative success of other maroon societies who arranged themselves with the *status quo* and compromised their claims to a total sovereignty. The difference between these two approaches is so stark that they are, in fact, hostile to the *Brigands*' radical stance and urge them to move on so as to not attract attention to their settlements from the colonising forces (OD 114). On a discursive level, the apparent celebration of these Maroons, is set into relation with other more well-known historical cases of marronage, that

³⁴⁶“look at these Maroons, everyone of them has buried the desolation of slavery in front of their huts and they kick it with their feet everyday while going in and out, that's what they've told me“, my translation.

have produced written records about their achievements, such as in the case of Haiti. As the narrator points out: “*Ni du côté des Brigands ni du côté des Marrons, il n’y eut de déclaration sur la liberté, l’esclavage et les autres sujets de conversation qui eussent du les concerner. Pas un n’y tenait, le travail de tous les jours était trop gros, le temps trop court*”³⁴⁷ (OD 115-16). The fact that they did neither produce a written statement, a constitution or a manifesto is not interpreted as revealing a lack in revolutionary energy. Instead, the 'work of the everyday', which consumed the energies of these maroon communities completely, can instead be read as bodily enactment of the total political resistance to the colonial project as which Glissant perceived marronage.

In the end, it appears to be above all the despotic nature of Flore Gaillard, which the narrative indirectly links to the figure of Toussaint Louverture (OD 90), that her downfall is attributed to. Her story – and Louverture's too, to some extent – seems to imply that gaining political sovereignty in a larger geopolitical context dominated by an alliance of colonial forces is an endeavour doomed to fail. Although the strategy pursued by the other maroon communities in *Ormerod* involves greater compromises, it points to an alternative route that proves to be more practical at this particular point in time, and just as radical. Yet, the account of Flore Gaillard's war remains too ambivalent for her story to be solely interpreted as a case of inevitable military defeat. At various points in the novel, her military defeat is as much attributed to a lack of inter-Caribbean solidarity, as well as to an anti-women attitude among fellow maroons, as it is to the strength of the coloniser, who enter strategic alliances when the need presents itself (OD 89). Whereas the other maroon communities are depicted as successful cases of community creation, they are also too afraid of the colonisers to grant Gaillard's troops refuge. Their stability is therefore counter-balanced by their fear or lack in 'revolutionary solidarity'. As is often the case in Glissant's fictional work, these contrasts emphasise that the narrative does not attach the position of moral superiority to any of the sides appearing in a given scenario, instead conceiving them to form a whole. In the case of *Ormerod*, and specifically focussing on the maroon communities that feature in it, both forms of resistance can legitimately exist side-by-side in the struggle against colonisation. Instead of being mutually exclusive, they can draw strength from one another.

To briefly recapitulate: This sub-section pursued a line of research that began by approaching the question of community in Glissant's fictional oeuvre by interrogating the kind of partnerships fostered between individual characters in his novels. I argued that the way these characters, who come from diverse cultural and social backgrounds, interact with one another, can be considered as providing the necessary cultural basis for the establishment of a shared sense of

³⁴⁷“Neither on the side of the *Brigands* nor the Maroons where there any declarations about freedom, slavery or other subjects that could have concerned them in their conversations. No one thought about it, the work of the everyday was too great, the time too short“, my translation.

community among the inhabitants of Martinique. I have also indicated that this community would necessarily comprise the descendants of colonisers and colonised, maroons and slaves alike. By evoking structural analogies between minimal communities of couples and larger collectives, as I have begun to do in this sub-section, I have opened a field of inquiry in Glissant's oeuvre that warrants to be pursued further. Whereas the main point of emphasis has thus far been on the identification of the cultural or epistemic foundation of communities, their internal make-ups and general contours have remained vague. Although allusions have been made that expressed a skepticism towards projects of political sovereignty (Flore Gaillard), reminiscent of the arguments put forward in 4.1.2., or attempts of ridding the community of antagonistic forces or cultural differences (colonisers), the appropriate form or scale Glissant envisioned for a community in his fictional work remains to be explored. Is it, for example, bound by the borders of the island, or the Caribbean archipelago? Is it tied by bonds of blood or spiritual forms of kinship? Another aspect that has not been addressed so far is the question as to how Glissant sought to bridge the border between fictional and non-fictional communities. In the ensuing sub-section, I will claim that closer attention to a set of literary techniques employed in his fictional work, such as the changes in narrative voice as well as his style of writing more generally, can contribute towards a clearer understanding of these two aspects, namely Glissant's conception of communities and the possibility of extending his fictional work into a non-fictional realm.

4.2.2. Stylistic Marronage – Creating Communities By Literary Means

As pointed out by the introductory quote to this chapter, literary techniques were closely associated with the problem of the community for Glissant. He for instance asserted in that regard that “*La rupture que je vois dans le tempo, pour Kafka, Deleuze ou Barthes, ne peut être qu'un drame personnel – pour moi, la rupture est une tragédie de la communauté*”³⁴⁸ (quoted in Lasowski 2015, 25). Whereas this quote might be read as evoking an analogy, or a symbolic representation of a social rupture in the literary realm through the rhythm of a discourse, I will make the argument for a different reading of the connection between literary style and Glissant's work on communities in this sub-section. The main point in that regard is going to be that for Glissant, literary techniques played a *constitutive role* for community creation. This claim rests on the view that the movement from individual isolation to the exploration of new kinds of communities, that I started outlining with regards to the depiction of characters and communities *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod* in the previous sub-section, is also performed through the literary techniques of changing narrating voices and representations of consciousness employed in these two novels.

³⁴⁸“The rupture that I see in the tempo of Kafka, Deleuze or Barthes cannot be but a personal drama – for me this rupture is the tragedy of the community”, my translation.

In *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod*, as well as in most of Glissant's fictional texts, the unstable identities of the narrators and their addressed audiences effectively unsettle the relationship between speaking subjects and listening audiences, thereby creating the impression that the reader is part of several overlapping communities that exist in different geographies, different points in time and according to different criteria of belonging. In my outline of these transitions I will, again, borrow from the field of narratology, namely by referring to the concepts of narrative voice, focalisation, and representations of streams of consciousness. Acknowledging that these are complex concepts whose meanings are subject to elaborate scholarly debates in literary studies, I will limit myself to an engagement with the general questions of how the narratives in these two novels keep shifting in terms of who gets to speak, who sees, and whose consciousness is being represented, and what the use of specific pronouns, particularly 'we' and 'you', implies in the context of Glissant's understanding and literary creation of communities. By singling out a set of particularly striking examples from *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod*, I propose to read these literary devices as a means to enact a 'creative marronage' in Glissant's novels, creative here in the aforementioned sense of bringing new kinds of communities into existence.

Who Is Speaking? – Shifting Narrating Voices in Le quatrième siècle

The narrating voices in *Le quatrième siècle* change regularly. Detecting who is speaking is further complicated by Glissant's mix of stylistic devices that usually, but not always, demarcate different forms of speech (quotation marks, italics etc.). Beginning from what appears to be an external narrator's point of view, the responsibility of relaying the accounts contained in the novel is increasingly taken on by the protagonists themselves, often in transitions that leave the reader guessing as to who is speaking from the text.³⁴⁹ The same can be said about the consciousness or internal thoughts of characters that are being represented. Only after several chapters, does it become possible for the reader to discern a pattern emerging between the different narrating voices, perspectives and streams of consciousness: In each new chapter or sub-chapter, the narrator presents the inner-thoughts of one added protagonist. The rather clear divisions between narrating voices in the first three chapters is, however, not maintained for long. It gives way to further changes, that eventually include the perspectives of all of the main characters, and even some of the supporting cast,³⁵⁰ thus creating a view from all actors involved. In the context of this chapter, I suggest to read this constellation as an expansion of a fictional community marked by a plurality of

349 I am referring to instances such as this one “*Car il eût préféré ô gabarre moi gabarre et il moi sur le ventre la poudre moi bateau et cogne sur le dos le courant et l'eau chaque pied moi corde glisser pour et mourir la rade pays et si loin au loin et rien moi rien rien pour finir tomber l'eau salée salée salée sur le dos et sang et poissons et manger ô pays le pays*” (Because he would have preferred oh barge me barge and he me on the belly the powder me boat and bang on the back the current and the water each foot me rope slip to and die the stranded country and so far away in the distance and nothing me nothing nothing to finally fall into the salty salty salted water on the back and blood and fish and eat oh country country) (LQS 35).

350 See for instance when the omniscient narrator recounts what Mathieu observes on the plantation (LQS 41), or when a nameless 'old man' begins narrating the story of Marie Nathalie as a young girl (LQS 64).

different perspectives, which together form a new collectivity.³⁵¹

Whereas Papa Longoué, the *quimboiseur*, remains the main focaliser throughout the majority of the novel, with his perspective merging frequently with that of the external narrator, the narrative voice changes dramatically in the final part of the book (*Croix Mission*). This section opens with the external narrator recounting the childhood of Mathieu Béluse in a flash back and his first encounter with Papa Longoué. The narration then turns into a chant or poem that is italicized and attributed to Mathieu, who is being alluded to as addressing Mycéa in a state of fever. The fact that Mathieu's speech is now italicised is a significant formal decision. Previously, only the voice of Papa Longoué was depicted in this manner, but at this point in the novel, his powers are waning and Mathieu Béluse is set to take over his responsibilities and his legacy as the one who protects the collective history of the island (LQS 251). As the fever subsides, Mathieu increasingly emerges as the focalising character, as he is speaking to Mycéa and his friends Bozambo and Charlequint, who are suddenly introduced as friends of the couple in the narrative, and whose background remains unspecified (LQS 279). Even though the conversation between them continues, the narrative keeps shifting between changing perspectives, up to a point where a complete confusion between the different pronouns I, you, he, we is created:

*“Moi qui vous parle ainsi sans parler déjà je comprends la parole que vous me criez tout bas pendant que superbes vous allumez avec des mots ce plein silence. Et même si vous dressez devant nous (vous et moi) l'écran des choses trop éclatantes la fascination [...] vous criez toi Bozambo moi Mathieu Charlequint nous le lever de la bête qui à soi-même réunie”*³⁵² (LQS 282)

Although Mathieu's initiation as inheritor of the island's history, overlaps with him taking over as focalising character in the narrative, his authorial position is unsettled several times. The transition of the main narrative voice from Longoué to Mathieu also coincides, with a shift from an isolated interaction between an intergenerational couple (Mathieu-Papa Longoué), via a romantic couple (Mathieu-Mycéa) towards a conversation among a community of friends. In this manner, the change in narrative voice marks the beginning of a new era and the emergence of a new community that can be described in terms of what Celia Britton has referred to as the 'collective narrative voice' in Glissant's fictional work.

Collective Narrative Voice in Celia Britton's Reading of Glissant's Fictional Work

In her essay *Collective Narrative Voice in Malemort, La Case du commandeur* and

351 If one were to attempt a categorisation of this highly unstable mode of narrating, whose very aim it appears to trouble any attempts at categorisation, what appears to be at play here in narratological terms, is an oscillation between zero focalisation, where the narrator knows more than the characters, and external focalisation, where the narrator knows only what can be observed about the characters. It could thus be considered a case of 'zero focalisation with a twist', where omniscience is the general principle but the view of the world and insights provided into the thoughts of characters are limited.

352 “Me who is speaking to you, without speaking, I understand the word that you are screaming silently to me, as you are lighting up this great silence. And even when (before you and me) you create this safety wall of these all-too screaming things [...] you scream, you Bozambo, me Mathieu Charlequint us the resurrection of the beast”, my translation.

Mahagony (2014), Britton has identified a similar movement in Glissant's novels as the one outlined above. Beginning from the premise laid out in the introduction to this chapter, that Glissant's literary oeuvre needs to be seen in the light of “the writer's responsibility to help the Martinican people achieve a sense of itself as a political and historical subject – a community that can act in its own name” (2014, 115), Britton finds that Glissant's fictional work is invested in working towards the establishment of a community by employing what she calls a collective narrative voice in these novels. In her reading, this collective narrative voice appears as “a very inchoate entity in which the relations between those who make it up have not yet been clarified” (119). In *Malemort* and *La case du commandeur* in particular she finds an indeterminacy and 'unstructured plurality' concerning this collective narrative voice that she interprets as being in opposition to traditional conceptions of community that are perceived as unified and closed (119), a point of view that I have already discussed in 4.1.2. By looking closely at the structure, the narrative voice and the usage of the pronoun 'nous' (we) in *Mahagony*, Britton moreover observes a shift from the former two novels towards what she refers to as “realizing the ideal of the dynamic internally differentiated collective consciousness” (125). This 'realisation', in both senses of the term, is based on the conviction that not a single voice can represent the community's experience but that several narrators need to tell the story from their particular perspectives, “retelling the same stories but from a different perspective, enlarging and relativizing their original significance” (123). Britton continues, “The various narrators, in other words, are all on the same textual level of reality and are aware of each other's existence”, evoking a plurality of voices that “is not disjunctive: their differences supplement rather than contradict each other; nor, as we have seen, are the voices isolated from each other. The result is a kind of stereoscopic, multidimensional, open-ended representation of an interwoven fictional reality” (125). As Britton argues, the author is actively included in the community made up by the collective narrative voice, and is relegated to same level as the characters and narrators (122).

By identifying a similar move, in my reading of *Le quatrième siècle*, I agree with Britton's argument and would like to expand it a further. From the relational point of view of this thesis, the shift between Glissant's earlier to his later novels does not solely have to be seen as a change from “a concern to build a militant collective consciousness that will rescue Martinique from its political alienation and stagnation” towards a “more fully developed theorization of Relation as a refutation of unity, hierarchy and essentialist identity”, as Britton argues in the conclusion of her essay (126). Instead, I would suggest that Glissant's fictional marronage in *Le quatrième siècle*, one of his earlier novels, is already marked by this general orientation towards the world (as shown in 3.1.), while perhaps not reaching as far as his later novels. In other words, if one adopts a view that is not

premised on a chronological development and discursive break between the 'early' and the 'late Glissant' (1.3.1.), the commonalities and back-and-forth movements between the politics pursued at these different stages of his life become visible. This kind of view could effectively supplement the one-directional development ascribed to his work in the secondary literature. In addition to Britton's reading, my approach, moreover, places greater emphasis on the extra-textual dimensions of Glissant's attempt at creating communities, as will become evident further below. This means broadening the view of literary analysis to deliberately address the question of how Glissant connected his fictional work with the realm of non-fiction. As I will elaborate in the following sub-sections, in addition to including the author in the collective narrative voice, as suggested by Britton, these extra-textual links are primarily created by including the reader in this community, an aspect that Britton does not discuss in her study. As I will point out in the following sub-section, close attention to how Glissant employed the pronouns 'we' and 'you' throughout his novels can be particularly productive in that regard.

Who are We? Who are You?

In the opening sections of *Le quatrième siècle*, who the pronoun 'we' refers to still remains unclear. This is illustrated in the following passage, where the identity of the narrator remains unspecified as well:

*“Pourquoi recommencer, pourquoi épeler à haute voix le premier cri puisque tout l'histoire résiste, que nous voila ici à tourner sans que le jour avance? On force, on pousse, mais les mots roulent, ils sont dans les mèches du toit, ils font un mur de tourbillons. Qui a jamais pu pousser un mur de tourbillons? C'est bientôt onze heures, non, midi va pointer, on ne peut pas”*³⁵³ (LQS 40).

At other parts in the novel, the narrative contains passages where the first person plural refers to different social groups. There are, for example, several cases when it appears to be expressed by maroons who define themselves by differentiation from the slaves living on the plantation: *“Tout ceci, les esclaves le savaient. Nous le savions, nous autres. Ils avaient par bribes, en manière d'occupation, presque sans le vouloir, reconstitué l'histoire”*³⁵⁴ (LQS 64). The perspective of this maroon collectivity is, however, unsettled just a few pages later, when the 'we' is evoked again, this time referring to the slaves on the Senglis plantation as knowing subjects :

“ils avaient beau de ne pas nous voir, nous savions le moindre vent qui passait sur leur tête, et la plus petite crispation de la main et même et jusqu'à oui le cerne des yeux et la minuscule imperceptible ride du désespoir qui d'jà battait contre leur lèvre, ils ne la sentaient pas [...] sans qu'eux mêmes, qui jamais nous voyaient, ressentent la douleur: sans qu'ils se doutent que nous, oui, nous l'observions grandir sur

353 “Why start afresh, why spell out the first cry with a loud voice, when this whole story is resisting, when we are going about in circles, and the day is not advancing? We push, we force it, but the words roll, they are in the strands of the roof, they erect a whirlwind wall. Who could ever push against a whirlwind wall. It is almost eleven o'clock, no it is almost midday, it is impossible”, my translation.

354 “The slaves knew all of that. We also knew, us, the others. They had reconstructed this story bit by bit, almost against their will, as a sort of past time”, my translation.

*leur face élue...*³⁵⁵ (LQS 65).

Sections such as these, where the narrative voice transitions from the perspectives of maroons and slaves in quick succession, effectively work towards obscuring or blurring the divide between them, which I have analysed earlier. The reader is led to take on both perspectives, which implies adopting a macro-view of the situation depicted without any stable allegiance to any group. Later, in a passage where Papa Longoué speaks about Melchior Longoué, the 'we' takes on a different meaning once more. Conjured up as a future community that is able to reflect on its own previous ignorance and has come to know its own history, the collective narrative voice seems to have reached a degree of certainty about its own identity, an identity that could be Martinican as much as it could be Caribbean, or even larger in scale: "*Et il connaissait quelque chose [...] ce n'était pas la connaissance, bon, nous étions tellement ignorants, ignorants de nous-mêmes ce qui est le plus terrible, mais pour lui ignorant c'était le refus de ne pas connaître, qui est déjà comme une grande connaissance*"³⁵⁶ (LQS 137). In an immediate sense, the inclusivity of the first person plural, and of the community it evokes, is performed through the use of the second person singular 'you'. In the following passage the narrator seems to potentially address both Mathieu and the reader directly following the depiction of an interaction between the two *colons* La Roche and Senglis :

*"Parce que la vie, le désir de mourir, la soif de posséder, t'aveuglent sur ton chemin [...] sauf au cas où, comme Senglis, tu n'es plus qu'un chiffon transparent envolé dans le moindre souffle et roulant avec le charroi; ou si encore, comme Longoué Melchior, tu es une tonne inébranlable, qui ne frémit que par l'élan caché de la racine"*³⁵⁷ (LQS 172-73).

This passage demonstrates how the first person plural is employed in the narrative in a way that urges the reader to identify with both positionalities, those of the coloniser Senglis and the maroon Melchior Longoué. In line with the main interest in this chapter, this could again be read as implying that they, although placed on the extreme ends of the political spectrum in a colonial setting, are both part of the same community – a community which the reader is invited to identify with as well, the reason being that literary techniques like these effectively produce a direct, and nonfictional, conversation between author and reader.

As if to further emphasise this point, as the narratives of *Le quatrième siècle* proceed, the role played by the 'you' pronoun is employed in increasingly explicit ways. Several pages into the final section of the novel, it becomes clearer that Papa Longoué is addressing Mathieu Béluse in

355 "as much as they tried, as if they did not see us, we knew of the tiniest wind blowing over their heads, and of the smallest cramp in their hands, and yes, even the rings under their eyes [...] and they themselves, who did not ever see us, could feel the pain, they had no idea that we could see it emerging on their chosen faces", my translation.

356 "He also knew something [...] it was not knowledge, well, we were so ignorant, so ignorant about ourselves, the most horrible ignorance, but for him being ignorant was the refusal to not know, which is almost like a kind of wisdom", my translation.

357 "Because life, the death wish, the desire to possess, blind you on your way [...] except if you are merely a transparent cloth, like Senglis, who could be blown away by the mildest breeze, and get carried away by a waggon, or if you are an unshakeable ton, like Melchior Longoué that only trembles from the hidden movement of the root", my translation.

this manner (LQS 195-96). Through the italicisation of Papa Longoué's speech and Mathieu's injections in brackets, the distinction between who speaks and who listens grows increasingly stronger, before Papa Longoué's voice becomes weaker and eventually dies down completely: “Ah, je te dis. *Puis le silence, alentour le carême, papa Longoué sans voix près de fougères calcinées (Mathieu comme un feu éteint se tassait sur la terre lamellée*³⁵⁸ (LQS 231). With Mathieu eventually taking over the responsibility of recounting the past, the 'you' turns from addressing Mathieu to suggesting an even more direct conversation with the reader:

“Tu es là, tu ouvres les yeux, c'est le clair du matin. Autour, les bois qui montent jusqu'au ciel. Tu fermes les yeux, tu te balances dans la douceur. Si un cri vient, c'est un colibri. Tu vois ton corps bien gras sur la natte ouvragée. Mais le bois c'est un fût qui monte dans la maison, et le ciel c'est le toit. Tut te lèves, tu sors, tu vois les maisons”³⁵⁹ (LQS 202, italics in original).

Mycéa's late appearance in the novel signifies yet another radical turning point that marks a new beginning for a future community (see also 3.2.1.) coinciding with Mathieu's adoption of the role as seer. As Mycéa reminds Mathieu : “*Alors donc, c'est déjà 1946, ça en fait du temps depuis qu'on a traversé la mer*”³⁶⁰ (LQS 286). In this case, the collective identity she is referring to is clearly marked by the shared historical experience of the descendants of the formerly enslaved. In the final passage of the novel, 'we' and 'they' have, however, changed once more. Whereas 'they' refers to the actual group of friends around Mycéa and Mathieu, 'you' appears to be expressed by the narrator addressing Mathieu directly. It might, nevertheless, also double as addressing the reader of the novel as a member of a future community, who, in a metaphorical sense, descends from the spiritual union between Mathieu and Mycéa:

“*Et dans sa certitude, il y avait le monde enfin ouvert, et clair, et peut-être si proche. Les pays qui de partout accouraient et te parlaient avec leurs sables, leurs boues rouges, leurs fleuves à l'infini, la clameur de leurs habitants. Les pays réels, et la science d'au loin qui à ta science profitait. Un bateau, un bateau lui aussi ouvert et transparent, qui enfin faisait suivre un arrivage d'un départ, un départ d'une arrivée. Le trou noir du temps et de l'oubli, d'où tu émerges*”³⁶¹ (LQS 286).

Through the stylistic choices pertaining to the changes in narrating voice, and the changes in the way the pronouns of 'we' and 'you' are employed in the text, Glissant not only hints at the emergence of a new fictional community in *Le quatrième siècle*, which still remains vague, but also

358 “Ah, I am telling you. And then the silence all around in the dry season. Papa Longoué without voice next to the dried up fern (Mathieu sank to the down like a dead fire onto the rippled earth)”, my translation.

359 “You are there, you open your eyes, its a bright morning. All around you the forest reaches up into the sky. You close your eyes, basking in kindness. If there is a shout, it comes from a hummingbird. You look at your well-nourished body on the well-made matt. But the forest is a stem that rises from the house and the sky is the ceiling. You get up and go outside, you see the houses”, my translation.

360 “It is already 1946, it has been some time since we have crossed the sea”, my translation.

361 “And in her certainty the world was suddenly open and bright, and perhaps to near. Countries rushing to you from all sides, and with them the sands, their red clay, their rivers reaching into eternity, the cries of their inhabitants who spoke to you. The real countries and their distant sciences that benefited your own science. A boat, the boat was also open and transparent, at last it allowed a departure to follow an arrival, an arrival to follow a departure. And the black whole of time and forgetting, from which you emerge”, my translation.

directly draws the reader into this community in much the same way as Flore Gaillard called the slaves of the plantations to join her *Brigands* with the war cry “*Viens avec moi!*”. What initially begins as distant interactions between Mathieu and Papa Longoué, draws increasingly closer, in the form of a spiralling movement bringing the past closer to the present, creating a whirlwind that, as I have argued, directly implicates the reader. Formulated in terms of Glissant's conception of marronage, these literary decisions perform a flight away from the isolation and separation in which Mathieu and Papa Longoué find themselves, on the removed hill on which the narrative begins, towards their inclusion into a new community of friends belonging to different social groups in Martinique whose trajectory is explored in *La Lézarde*. These stylistic techniques emphasise the way in which literature can be employed to create nonfictional communities by calling on to the readers to identify with the cause of *all* of the novel's protagonists.

To the inclusive nature of the 'you' and 'we' presented in *Le quatrième siècle*, one can add that, at no point, is this 'we' being constructed in an antagonistic fashion, or in opposition, to a 'they'. This contributes to the impression that no single character or group can be blamed for the system of oppression and segregation against which Glissant's fiction is engaged. Instead, bearing all of the above mentioned considerations in mind, it is the very *form* of the colonial plantation system that emerges as the object of contestation. As the above cited examples indicate, cutting off or killing the coloniser to constitute an alternative community is not an option for Glissant. The main social actors of the island are all confined to the same stage. Uniting them and forming a shared sense of belonging among them, which appears to be an impossibility in *Le quatrième siècle*, is precisely the area where a politics of relation should intervene. The kind of proposition I consider Glissant's style of writing to perform in this regard will be sketched out in greater detail in the following.

Political Implications of Fleeing Into the 'Forest' of Literary Illegibility

If one were to read Glissant's opaque style of writing not as the expression of singular artistic eccentricity, but as constituting a type of literary *petit marronage*, it could be seen as taking the form of an individual path that others can take to form a *collective* type of marronage, thus associating the issue of community creation directly with the question of literary style. The choice of referring to Glissant's writing practice as a stylistic marronage can be substantiated by studies like Khady Fall Diagne's *Le marronage comme essai d'esthétique littéraire négro-africaine contemporaine – Senghor et Césaire ou la langue décolonisée*, in which Diagne argues to view the practice of writers like Senghor and Césaire to break with established French grammar as a revolutionary literary technique. Framing this literary technique deliberately as an 'intellectual marronage', which deconstructs the 'autocratic French language' she writes about the intention of her work: “The question is how, parallel to the wave of rebellion carried by this first generation of

black intellectuals, they aesthetically undertook the project of stripping the language of its hegemonic packaging, despite of the worship or reverence of the French language which had been forced into their heads”³⁶² (2018, 13). Yarimar Bonilla writes about the literary style of Aimé Césaire in similar terms (2015), pointing out that Césaire self-identified as a maroon in a famous repost to the Haitian poet René Depestre. After Depestre had criticised the institutionalisation of Négritude for its assimilationist stance, Césaire wrote:

“If you want to know what I am, I am not the mayor of Fort de France, I AM A NEGRE MARRON. Mentally, I am a nègre marron; I refuse to lower my head before anyone. I refuse the big brothers. I refuse the uncles. I refuse to be shown the way; I will find the way myself, with my people” (2015, 49).³⁶³

Taking Césaire by his word, and ignoring the complex political entanglements around his engagement as Mayor of Fort-de-France and French deputy, which Césaire disavowed in this quote, Bonilla suggests that Césaire's 'baroque, impenetrable style' can be directly linked to a project of intellectual marronage, because “In his writings Césaire repeatedly flouted the traditions and norms of the French literary canon” (50). From the analytical lens espoused in this work, breaking with standard French writing and infusing it with creole words or phrases as a practice of literary creolisation, decolonisation or marronage is just one element of a larger practice I describe as Glissant's politics of relation.³⁶⁴ By remaining on a textual level and not attempting to effectively connect the use of specific literary devices with institutional political projects, these approaches divert from my own arguments pertaining to Glissant's practice of literary fugitivity.

Although Glissant at no point cast himself and his literary style as the reincarnation of the *nèg fondamental* as which Césaire proclaimed himself (Bonilla 2015, 49) (also see 3.3.1.), some passages in *Le discours antillais* can be referred to in support of a line of reading that associates his literary style with the historic movement of marronage. Glissant, for example, used the analogy of the forests that once accorded maroons with a safety zone from persecution to describe the opaque style of several Caribbean writers. This implied that techniques of resistance learned in the struggle against slavery were being applied in the literary realm as well. Following a literary analysis of the works of Garcia Marquez and William Faulkner he wrote:

“The forest is the last vestige of myth in its present literary manifestation. In its impenetrable nature

362 “*Il s'agira de voir comment, parallèlement à la vague frondeuse portée par ces premiers intellectuels noirs, ils ont entrepris esthétiquement le projet de écosser la langue de son enveloppe hégémonique, malgré les procès de vénération ou de déférence de la langue française qui leur ont été intentés*”, my translation.

363 “*Si vous voulez savoir ce que je suis, je ne suis pas le Maire de Fort de France: JE SUIS UN NEGRE MARRON. Mentalement, je suis un nègre marron; je refuse de baisser la tête devant qui que ce soit. Je refuse les grands frères. Je refuse les ton-tons. Je refuse que l'on me montre la route. La route je la trouverai moi-même avec mon peuple*”, translated by Yarimar Bonilla.

364 For an overview of debates in Caribbean studies concerned with literary creolisation and marronage see for example the volume *Caribbean Creolization – Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature, and Identity*, edited by Kathleen M. Balutansky and Marie-Agnès Sourieau (1998). Instead of casting literary creolisation and marronage as opposites, as suggested by several contributions in this volume, my conceptualisation of creolisation (1.4.1.) provides the historical framework in which Glissant's intellectual marronage intervenes.

history feeds our desire. The forest of the maroon was thus the first obstacle the slave opposed to the transparency of the planter. There is no clear path, no way forward, in this density. You turn in obscure circles until you find the primordial tree. The formation of history's yearned-for ideal, so tied up with its difficulty, introduces us to the dilemma of peoples today still oppressed by dominant cultures" (CD 82-83).

On the following page Glissant asserted that "in obscurity, the slave sets the trap for the master" (CD 84). In addition to proposing literary non-accessibility or incomprehension as a survival strategy against the onslaught of dominant colonial cultures, he also cast it as a deliberate political strategy of attack. The invisibility of black cultures, in this context – a theme I will pick up further below –, is not only brought about as a result of the colonial violence, it also offers a new realm in which an alternative politics can be formulated. Glissant for instance, claimed in that regard that "The isolation of the writer from current language use and readers is a 'regrettable but necessary condition'" (CD 191) and that opacity could be seen, "as a positive value to be opposed to any pseudo humanist attempt to reduce us to the scale of some universal model" (CD 162). What emerges from these statements, that evoke strong parallels between literary style and historical maroons, is the view that non-accessibility is not an end in itself, but a necessary political practice in response to a specific kind of domination. In the following, I will zoom into this aspect of Glissant's political practice by describing his style of writing in *Le quatrième siècle* in particular, as well as the differences can be detected between the two novels.

As is the case with all of Glissant's novels, *Le quatrième siècle* is not written in transparent prose, but in a poetic style that is spoken by all narrators and characters, with no distinctions being made among their social status, age or local tongue. While the role of language, and the ability to understand one another is a recurring theme in the novel, as I have pointed out above (4.2.1.), *Le quatrième siècle* is mostly narrated in standard French, with only a few inclusions of the local creole, or references to unspecified 'African languages' spoken by some of the maroon characters being made. The sprinklings of Creole across the first chapters, (LQS 68), become more frequent following the official abolition of slavery in 1848 (LQS 170-72), and in the depiction of Mathieu's youth towards the end of the novel (LQS 251-258, 266). The increasing occurrence of creole phrases, across the anachronistic temporal structure of the novel, runs simultaneously to the emergence of a growing social consensus between the (former) masters and slaves which I have addressed in the previous section. In one of these passages, creole is referred to, in this sense, as non-hierarchical language, 'a language of consensus where the *vous* mixes with the *'tu'* (LQS 225). *Le quatrième siècle* depicts the problem of the heteroglossic³⁶⁵ context produced by the plantation

³⁶⁵Here referring generally to "a diversity of voices, styles of discourse, or points of view in a literary work and especially a novel", see <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heteroglossia>.

system on the level of the story, among other cases, in the scene when the first Longoué and La Roche enter a conversation instead of fighting out the confrontation between maroon and slave master, to which La Roche would be legally obliged. Mirroring the first interaction between Longoué and Louise mentioned above, La Roche addresses Longoué in creole and Longoué responds in his 'African language', which he 'used for the first time in ten years' (LQS 106). They end up having a 'dialogue which was no dialogue', spanning over several pages in which they share intimate thoughts and concerns with one each other, “*chacun avec on langage étranger à l'autre, et dans les manières qui lui conviendraient*”³⁶⁶ (LQS 107). Their individual confinement in the social roles that are assigned to them, their isolation, is expressed in the following passages:

*“l'un et l'autre refermés chacun sur son propre dommage, et mutuellement inabordables, comme s'ils voilaient d'instinct l'impudeur de la confiance ou comme si, obligés qu'ils étaient de se confier, ils essayient pourtant de préserver leur libre arbitre, ou, plus humainement, leur quant-à-soi”*³⁶⁷ (LQS 106).

The narrative here represents the kind of 'speechlessness' that was violently created and maintained on the slave boat (LQS 62), and the heteroglossic social framework produced by the plantation system. Against the slave traders' deliberate strategy of producing a constellation in which slaves would not be able to communicate with one another, by bringing together slaves from different parts of Africa, the narratives in *Le quatrième siècle* repeatedly emphasise the possibility of 'understanding one another' despite not being able to 'understand one another's language'. Similar to the initial encounter between Longoué and Louise, the conversation between the maroon and the *colon* accordingly turns into a mutual pact of non-aggression when La Roche hands over Longoué's 'Wanted' profile along with 'a barrel' that comes to represent the mysterious historic entanglements between slaves, maroons and colonisers that have shaped life on the island (LQS 136).

Reading *Le quatrième siècle* requires a similar work of acceptance from the reader, an acceptance of the inability to fully understand what is being said. The energy to be invested into this kind of work is heightened by the undefined and changing relationship between the narrators and the characters I discussed earlier. The fact that it is never completely clear who is addressing the reader, is mirrored in the stories contained in *Le quatrième siècle* via the problematisation of the ability to 'see' (into the past) and to speak (about the past) in the conversations between Mathieu Béluse and Papa Longoué. This mirroring of the narratological concern about who can speak and who can see in the non-fictional realm of the readers' engagement with the text thus creates a doubly heightened effect.

366“taking turns and speaking in their own languages and in a manner that was convenient for them”, my translation.

367“One like the other imprisoned by their misery, as if they wanted to instinctively cover up the shamefulness of their trustworthiness, or as if they just tried to maintain their free will, or even – more humanely – their interest, now that they were forced to trust each other“, my translation.

While the majority of *Le quatrième siècle* novel is legible to a French speaking readership, a virtuosic mix of formal devices makes up for the 'standardised' way of writing. These devices include a playful use of punctuation, quotation marks, brackets and italics, that are at times employed to differentiate and clarify and at times employed to merge and obscure, especially in the case of the perspectives from which the narratives are told. Whereas, for instance, brackets are sometimes inserted into the text to show interruptions of the narrative flow, in other cases they are employed for entirely different purposes, such as depicting a protagonist's inner thoughts. Glissant takes the same liberties in the way he uses italics and quotation marks. As a result, following the narratives woven into *Le quatrième siècle* requires a strong commitment by the reader, a willingness to accept – for the duration of several chapters or the entire book – that aspects of the narrative will remain mysterious or undisclosed, and that tracing the relations between the main characters alone (some of whom carry the same names) requires a great level of attention and dedication. Although some of the characters from *La Lézarde* feature again in *Le quatrième siècle*, having literally moved or migrated from one novel to the other, thus crossing the permeable borders of the individual books, they are introduced without any indication that *Le quatrième siècle* is a sequel or prelude to *La Lézarde*. As a result, even readers familiar with Glissant's previous novels are left in doubt about the degree of continuity and rupture between books, and also whether the names of characters are, in fact, referring to the same personalities as in the previous novels. Frequent changes in times, places, and oblique references to metaphors or objects whose meaning is not explained throughout the narrative, contribute to an immediate and ongoing sense of confusion as to what the novel is 'actually about'.³⁶⁸ Seen through the analytical lens of stylistic marronage, all of these literary choices could be interpreted as performing a literary act of flight.

The inherent ambiguity of form-politics', to which I referred in the preface, however complicates the kind of politics assigned to this line of flight. This can be demonstrated by referring to the different opinions held about the politics of prose, as an example. Prose writing has, for example, been associated with a wide array of conceptions of egalitarianism and democracy, and can just as well be rejected as a style of writing that consolidates the economic and geopolitical injustices brought about by colonial modernity, deifying private property and possessive individualism (Goldhill 2002, Siskin 1996). Since it is impossible to permanently attach a particular politics to a particular literary form, the larger context in which a particular style is performed matters. Put differently, of interest is less how political a particular style of writing *is*, than what it

³⁶⁸The mystery around the meaning or contents of certain metaphors or objects is, at times, performed using the object of a little barrel, that is passed on from the *colon* La Roche to the first Longoué, and across several generations of his descendants until Papa Longoué passes the barrel onto Mathieu Béluse. The barrel's contents remain subject to increasingly heated speculations until, at the very end of the novel, it turns out that there is only a bit of dust at the bottom of it, the remains of a snake that was kept in it for many years (LQS 262).

does. In Glissant's case, the use of poeticism in his novels – in addition to the aforementioned literary tools concerning the narrating function – easily defers readers who are not willing to engage with something they cannot easily understand, as in Glissant's aforementioned definition of a racist as 'someone who refuses what he or she cannot understand'. Translated into the practice of marronage, once more, those readers who are willing to take the risk of temporary confusion, it is an invitation to follow the traces produced by his writing, based on the assumption that the reader will be able to make the most important connections him or herself. As a result, those who are willing to follow Glissant on the line of flight he performs in *Le quatrième siècle* will be limited in number. This community of readers is not necessarily an exclusive 'chosen few', but a small group of people who intuitively feel that the stories Glissant has to tell warrant the work of reading and 'getting lost' in the narrative.

This practice of writing and reading relates to another flight which Glissant performs with *Le quatrième siècle*. It is not only one from prose to a poeticism, but above all an epistemological flight, from rational objectivity and a binary logic producing linear chronologies and direct causalities to another approach to knowledge that is closer to a spiritual subjectivity, where intuition and the imagination play pivotal roles, as outlined earlier (see 2.2.). Connecting the two layers of style and content in this particular manner, Glissant's fiction not only demands that his readers follow the philosophical discussion around these opposing epistemes, but while doing so to *themselves already perform* this epistemological shift in their engagement with the text. Obscurity, in this sense, becomes a deliberate political strategy in response to the reliance of the dominant epistemology on the necessity for transparency and accessibility.

Through the unstable voices through which *Le quatrième siècle* is told, the reader is directly implicated in this history, invited to participate in it, to see it as a shared human history, one of the founding moments of *our* modernity. The reader, who is addressed at times directly and other times indirectly as 'you' or 'we', can hardly be disinterested after the work he or she has invested into following the intricate traces of Glissant's literary marronage. The general context of the story remains too 'unexplained' for the reader to remain an 'outsider' once the book has been read. As much as *Le quatrième siècle* thus conjures up a new community of the living and the dead, where generations of slaves, maroons and colonisers belong to one another, the reader of *Le quatrième siècle* is pulled into the text as a constitutive element of this community. To put this more bluntly, what Glissant aimed at doing stylistically in his work of fiction differed strongly from what is conventionally associated with reading novels. Instead of primarily offering the opportunity for diversion, to 'identify' with a protagonist, or to temporarily 'enter a different world', – although these undoubtedly also play a role –, Glissant's fictional work *calls on the reader to join a community*

that is both fictional and non-fictional, a community bound by a shared relational imaginary.

Section Summary

This section was devoted to studying the conceptualisation of communities as it arises from Glissant's fictional work. In the process, I paid attention both to the portrayal of individual characters and groups in a selection of his novels, as well as the stylistic techniques employed in *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod* to bring about a change from the isolation and segregation brought about by slavery towards the emergence of communities that could emerge from this context. The general direction I traced proceeds from individual isolation to several attempts at imagining a community that could be imagined on the scale of the island and, potentially, the archipelago.

In the first part (4.2.1.), I showed how Glissant's fictional engagement with communities begins by depicting several couples that are linked through romance, friendship or student-teacher relationships. These couples are, above all, shaped by a mutual respect for each other's opacity, an ethics of acknowledging the other's rationality even when it is not immediately legible. As the transgressive dynamic between these couples indicates, the community Glissant proposed here was creole in nature, necessarily including both colonisers and colonised. None of the characters appearing in his fiction are inherently superior to another, neither in moral nor in technical terms. They all depend on each other's existence. In other words, the enemy in *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod* is neither a singular character nor a group of people, but the very framework that limits them geographically or imaginatively and which – as I indicated in the previous chapter with regards to the geographic confinement of the island – needs to be overcome. Instead of celebrating a revolution that would replace the colonial governmental model of the plantation with another institutionalised form of community, Glissant privileged uncertain and temporary arrangements that do not claim exclusive ownership of the land they inhabit. On a conceptual level, the kind of community creation Glissant associates with his understanding of marronage comprises, at different stages, a community of lovers (Longoué/Louise, Mathieu/Mycéa), a community linked by political struggle (the youth gang in *La Lézarde*, the *Brigands* in *Ormerod*), a community set on establishing a permanent political order (the 'half-family, half-tribe' Maroons in *Ormerod*).

While the first sub-section focussed on the characters and communities that are represented in Glissant's fiction, the second sub-section (4.2.2.) was interested in how he employed stylistic means to specify the form of his fictional communities and to bridge the divide between fictional and non-fictional communities. Referring to the work of Britton around Glissant's usage of 'collective narrative voice', I claimed that through a complex interplay of narrative voices in *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod*, Glissant not only worked to level the hierarchy between different

characters and narrators as well as between the characters and the author. By setting up an egalitarian space where a situation can be seen from all angles, approaching its complexity to the greatest extent possible, Glissant in the same instance *drew the reader into the communities* he constructed in his narratives. The playful shifts between the pronouns 'we' and 'you' in particular create a conversation between the narrators and the reader that can be considered non-fictional. The effect this has on the reader is not only confusion and unsettlement. The ongoing uncertainty as to whether one really knows what is going on, also evokes a feeling of being implicated, of being directly addressed, and charged with "playing one's part". In *Ormerod* the task to uncover history or to 'dream the archipelago', is being passed on from the narrator to the reader, via the various characters who are on this quest. The community that is being addressed here, a community of readers, merges with several other communities: the community of the Caribbean people, the community of the *Brigands de Bois* around Flore Gaillard and, as I will show in the ensuing section, the global community of the Batouto. Not forming a congruent whole, these communities overlap, are permeable and together form an archipelagic structure.

This section has moreover shown how, beginning from a radical sense of isolation brought about by the slave trade, Glissant's fictional work explores the island and the archipelago as two possible realms in which new communities could be imagined. These two directions were identified both in the content as well as the form and structure of the novels I studied. Instead of proposing a singular conception of community, a variety of communities, from partnerships between fictional characters, to sovereign maroon communities, and a non-fictional community of Glissant readers, emerged in Glissant's fiction. None of them were presented as privileged over an other. And they all shared an essential inclusiveness as well as a vagueness that leaves a significant degree of uncertainty as to how 'exactly' these communities are configured.

In terms of Glissant's political practice more generally, this section was, above all, confirmed the general importance of community creations for Glissant, and particularly in his fictional work. In line with his conception of politics introduced in 1.2., what matters most in this context is not the specificity of questions of governance, hierarchies or divisions of power in specific communities. Instead the question of the culture informing the community, and who gets to belong to it, according to which criteria arises as a central concern. With regards to this *cultural question* I have noted the allusions Glissant made to structural analogies between small and big collectives. The interactions between Louise and Longoué, between Longoué and La Roche, for example, imply that the only foundation for a new sense of community in a Caribbean context would be a creole one, that respects the others opacity and does not equate difference with non-belonging. About this first kind of Glissant communities one could also note their distinct

associative aspects, in the sense of implying a 'unity in diversity'. In each of the communities that appeared in this section, these aspects were more pronounced than dissociative ones require the identification of a fixed Other or enemy against which the communities forms itself. In strict institutional-legal terms, this section also showed a hesitation or skepticism on Glissant's part towards an endorsement of established forms of political sovereignty in a Caribbean context. Instead, both in the case of Longoué's maroons in *Le quatrième siècle*, as well as the Maroons and *Brigands* in *Ormerod*, Glissant was more interested in exploring the possibility of multiple, non-exclusive and overlapping community allegiances in his fictional work, an aspect that will become even more pronounced in the following section.

4.3. From the Archipelago to the World Community

“The only community today that is struck down in its right to constitute a community is the 'world-community’”
– Édouard Glissant, *Faulkner, Mississippi* (FM 221)

Further extending the line of flight from the plantation to the Archipelago depicted above, this section proposes a study of several 'world-communities' Glissant created in his fictional work as well as in his literary analysis of the works of other writers. The line of inquiry I am establishing in this process leads, once more, from fictional towards non-fictional and eventually concrete organisational engagements, with the question of what constitutes a Glissantian world-community serving as guiding question.

Contrary to what some of Glissant's critics have identified as a decreasing interest in local or regional political conflicts towards conflict-free universal poetic concerns (see 1.3.1.), Glissant's perception of the late 20th and early 21st century's global political landscape was not free of conflict. Describing the difference between the contemporary moment and that of the anti-colonial struggles, Glissant referred to the 'economic wars' that are being fought by, or in the name of, multinational cooperations as, “the invisibility of the international structure of power and finance, whose centre is everywhere and boundaries nowhere” (FM 219). The suffering and destruction brought about by these 'invisible forces' appear in repeated enumerations covering entire pages in his essay, enumerations that depict, formally, the impossibility of adequately expressing 'the disorder in the world', and all the 'savage poverty', 'solitude', 'madness', 'impassive suicides', 'successive murders' and genocides, the 'millions of deaths that 'we no longer ask any television station to tally up for us' (FM 220). It is out of this conflict-ridden context, and not as part of a celebration of the advantages in mobility and flows of goods and information offered by neoliberal globalisation, that Glissant called for a new type of politics that would have to take the question of community on a global level seriously. For Glissant, this exploration would necessarily have to reconcile the spheres of the 'cultural' and 'the political' in line with the conception of politics outlined in 1.2.3., as he wrote in the following passage:

“Le politique tendait à l'apparition et au renforcement des nations, dans l'Europe et dans l'Occident en expansion. Le culturel manifeste l'angoisse et la convulsion des entités intellectuelles, spirituelles ou morales mises spectaculairement en relation avec d'autres, divergentes ou opposées, dans ce qui est désormais pour nous la totalité-monde”³⁶⁹ (IPD 247).

³⁶⁹“The political was invested in the emergence and strengthening of nations, in Europe and in the West during the age of its expansion. The cultural manifests the anxiety and the convulsion of the intellectual, spiritual or moral entities that were spectacularly brought in relation with one another, diverging from or being opposed to one another, in what now constitutes the whole-world for us”, my translation.

As this quote points out, thinking politically without taking into consideration cultural knowledge would lead down a one-way street of reproducing the model of the nation-state and the re-enforcement of exclusive modes of citizenship in Glissant's view. This view is based on the observation that the nation-state model, as it was promoted as a normative political format by 'political thought' across the world, proved to be increasingly incompatible with a cultural awareness or shared 'world consciousness' that he perceived to have been 'spectacularly' brought into contact. Towards the end of his study of *Faulkner, Mississippi* (1996), and against this world-historic background, Glissant described the urgency for those with a 'relational' consciousness of the world, to create an alternative form of belonging in terms of a 'world-community':

“Most of the communities in our world (those that have been formed traditionally, around the fireside) are physically threatened in their very existence, even beyond what is comfortable for us to consider. But no longer are any of them threatened in their right to assemble. That right is no longer debatable. For such a great number of peoples in Africa, Asia, in the Americas and Oceania. Extinction, yes; famine, yes; genocide, yes; epidemic disease, yes; 'yes' to terror and disappearance – but even in the parade of living skeletons or in the endless line of unburied corpses, no one is any longer denied the human and very tacit right to be recognized as self, as a non-other, as outside of others.

Daring to offer up a hymn, repetitive, and pulsating but revitalized, to the notion as well as to the words, 'community!'” (FM 221).

Glissant then continued to list five aspects in bullet-point format that break with the general form of literary analysis pursued throughout *Faulkner, Mississippi*, to such an extent that the narrative takes the form of a manifesto when it announces:

“1. The only community today that is struck down in its right to constitute a community is the 'world-community'

2. In so many of these traditional communities threatened by physical disappearance tragedy remains, but the new epic word emerges from out of this community, the only one that does not conceive of itself or feel itself as a community: the world-totality, the whole world” (FM 221).

As Glissant made explicit here, he perceived the so-called *traditional communities* ('around the fireside'), to be main archives for a 'new epic' in the sense of the 'new founding myth' discussed at the onset of chapter 2. Glissant arrived at the problem of community via an interrogation of the discourses that allow for a community to imagine itself as such, as he explained further below on his list:

“5. The literatures of the world are present and presented all together in such a prodigiously diversified way in this epic – as though appearing before the stunned face that, once again, all together, looks at us” (FM 222).

According to Glissant, the imagination of this kind of world-community is contained in a specific corpus of 'world literature'. In contrast to epics that exclude other cultures – of which Glissant cited *The Illiad*, d'Aubigné's *Tragiques* and the Old Testament as examples –, he

envisioned a new kind of epic that would be not exclusionary, but universal in the sense that it attempts to include 'all cultures and all humanities. As examples of the latter he cites 'the epics of the African emperors', 'legends of the gods of India', and 'the songs of the Berber and Arab heroines' (FM 22). As elaborated in 2.0., the creation of this kind of epic can not be the sole work of an individual poet. Instead it would have to be perceived in 'all the literatures of the world', reminiscent of Jean-Luc Nancy's conception of literature as opposed to myth (4.1.1.). Unlike the starting point of most contemporary theorisation around the notion of 'world literature', which tends to rely on a list of *individual* authors as their starting point, Glissant's approach to world literature, and I will elaborate on this more below (4.3.4.), can be considered to be essentially *collective* and '*communitarian*' in nature.

While it might at first appear surprising that Glissant made his case for a world-community in a study of Faulkner, reading Faulkner's work as extending the Caribbean archipelago to include the US-South, in line with the line of flight outlined in chapter 3, shows how Faulkner served as a conceptual bridge into the whole-world for Glissant. Encountering the work of a white American writer that emanated, like his own, from the 'fantasy of the plantation' – whose will to autarky is in such stark contrast to the cross-cultural relations and interdependences in the outside world (PR 67) – Glissant proposed in *Poétique de la Relation* that “This is the only sort of universality there is: when, from a specific enclosure, the deepest voice cries out” (PR 74).

For reasons pointed out above (4.1.2.), Glissant's decision to explore the possibility of creating a community on a world-scale can not only be attributed to the fact that the national and regional communities he was politically invested in did not come into existence in his lifetime or in the foreseeable future. Instead of solely viewing his move towards a global level as a way out of an impasse on the level of the island or the archipelago, it could just as well be seen as a maturation of his insistence that the central point of reference for his poetic and political work has consistently been the 'whole-world'. The project of 'world-communities' that exist outside the parameters of the nation state, and the insistence on transnational solidarities of people with shared political sensibilities can thus be considered as building on his conception of the Tout-Monde, as being constituted by a 'totality of differences'.

Instead of engaging with Glissant's brand of cosmopolitanism on the basis of such abstract philosophical notions as his poetic definition of the Tout-Monde – which his critics have taken as reference points for their rejection of Glissant's universalism as endorsing a singular conception of the world (Hallward, 1.3.1.) –, this section claims that a study of the concrete forms of Glissant world-communities in his fictional and non-fictional work will contribute to shifting the debate on Glissant's brand of universalism onto more stable grounds.

The ensuing sub-sections substantiate this argument, by firstly (4.3.1.), showing how the kind of fictional community identified in the previous sections, which was largely based in the Caribbean, overlaps with a fictional community that is global in reach through a presentation of the epic Glissant wrote for the Batouto people. In a second step (4.3.2.), I will show how Glissant connected this global fictional community from a historic fictional into a contemporary and non-fictional realm by speculating on the allegiance of historic personalities to this imaginary world community. This conceptual move will be further concretised by bringing recent debates on world literature in conversation with Glissant's world-communities, Glissant's proposition of a canon of Tout-Monde literature can be read as a community-building project addressed to a world community of poets, dead and alive.

4.3.1. Invisible But Real – Glissant's Global Epic of the Batouto Community

This sub-section offers a reading of what I consider to be the founding epic of a global Batouto community as proposed in Glissant's book *Sartorius* (1999) and *Ormerod* (2003). As I will argue, the description of their fictional way of life and their belief system can not only be considered a direct expressions of Glissant's philosophy of relation, it also provides the foundation for an imaginary cultural lineage informing different forms of world-communities that Glissant created in his fictional and non-fictional political practice.

The Batouto Origin Story in Sartorius

The epic account of the Batouto as a fictional ethnic group is presented in the first and last chapters of the novel *Sartorius* (1-162, 342-52). Bracketed by their origin story, the second and third chapters contain the life stories of individual Batoutos who are not cast as their descendants in biological terms but who are considered to form part of their 'invisible nation' through an unconscious identification with their view of and way of being in the world. Appearing at a relatively late moment in Glissant's career, the idea of the Batouto points in several new directions in his overall oeuvre:

In a first instance it overcomes the two 'impossibilities' or the 'curse' that underly most of Glissant's fictional work by inventing the story of the 'original' African ancestors of Mycéa, Mathieu and Thaël. This impossibility of knowing the land-before, denotes the ability to know or see the 'land-before', thus an awareness of what happened before the violent rupture of the Atlantic slave trade throughout Glissant's fictional work (see 2.0). By shifting the narrative to an African setting, *Sartorius* also stages a fictional 'return to Africa', which Glissant had generally dismissed as an essentially futile move of *retour* which he associated with Négritude movement (3.3.). Secondly, Glissant's imagination of the Batouto people did not lead to a re-interpretation of Martinican or Caribbean history to provide historic knowledge as a discursive basis for a national project in

Martinique, in line with his conception of the founding myth (2.0.), but towards providing the discursive basis for a world-community, as outlined in the introduction of this section. Thirdly, and most importantly for the purpose of this chapter, the imagination of the Batouto story can be seen as a literal response to a statement by Gilles Deleuze which also serves as the epigraph to *Sartorius*:

*“La santé comme littérature, comme écriture, consiste à inventer un peuple qui manque. Il appartient à la fonction fabulatrice d'inventer un peuple. On n'écrit pas avec ses souvenirs, à moins d'en faire l'origine ou la destination collectives d'un peuple à venir encore enfoui sous ses trahisons et reniements”*³⁷⁰ (SAT 307).

This statements echoes a phrase mentioned three decades earlier in *L'Intention poétique*, where Glissant wrote that the 'decisive act in the realm of literature is to build a nation' (IP 179). The invention of 'a people that is missing', or a 'nation' thus takes up the theme Glissant evoked earlier with reference to *Faulkner, Mississippi* (1996) and the argument that, “The only one that is struck down in its right to constitute a community is the world-community“. This kind of 'world-community' is 'imaginary' both in the sense that it is explicitly being imagined, or dreamed up, but it can also function as the basis for an actual 'imagined community' that is conceptually open to everyone. As I will outline in the following, by revealing their story, by 'making them visible', a formulation that is fundamental to Rancière's definition of political literature (1.2.2.), the reader is implicitly invited to *become* part of the community. Tied back to the conceptional work on 'the political', as a process of production, a poetics, of making associations or relations among things and people, *Sartorius* can therefore in itself be considered a political event in that it *literally* invents a people whose history and identity can be shared by a potential 'world-community' that is no longer bound by shared blood or soil, but by a particular way of seeing and being in the world.

Reading Glissant with Rancière, one could argue that the Batouto people stake a claim to become part of our global political landscape against the efforts of globalising forces to prevent its appearance. Against the totalitarian and homogenising project of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* (2000), the Batouto people stage a silent resistance through individual practices. Their relatedness to one another is only slowly being revealed to themselves. The Batouto are not limited to a particular part of the globe and cannot be identified according to established social markers. Instead, the 'hard political line', which Glissant wrote about in *Poétique de la Relation*, mentioned at the onset of this work (preface, 1.1.), and which I perceive him to have indirectly traced via the invention of the fictional Batouto people, is an imaginary line that differentiates people, cultures and nations according to whether they perceive the diversity of the world as something that warrants to be protected against the onslaught of neoliberal globalisation or not.

³⁷⁰“Health as literature, as writing, consists of inventing a people that is missing. Inventing a people forms part of the creative faculties. One does not write with ones memories, unless we turn them into the collective point of origin or the destination of a people that is yet to come, and that still lies buried under its betrayals and denials”, my translation.

The Narrator and Reader of the Epic

As with Glissant's general approach to Caribbean history, the necessity of imagining, inventing or 'dreaming up' the history of the Batouto is derived from the fact that nothing is known about them, pointing to the *problem of history* in oral societies more generally and for the descendants of slaves in a Caribbean more specifically (2.2.). Along with the emphasis on the purely fictional character of the Batouto story, the authority of the narrator – who again remains unspecified but bears traces of the fictional/non-fictional persona of Glissant and Mathieu –, and his ability to construct a 'true narrative', is frequently destabilised at the onset of the novel (SAT 89). These allusions to the unstable boundary between fiction and non-fiction work to unsettle the otherwise pseudo-ethnographic tone of *Sartorius*.

As another example of what I discussed above as Glissant's stylistic marronage (4.2.2.), the different ways in which the reader is addressed constantly destabilise any fixed rapport with the story. The way the narrative constantly switches between '*vous*' and the intimate singular '*tu*', '*je*' and '*we*', for example, maintains a degree of uncertainty whether the reader is really part of the community or not (SAT 64). This can, for example, be illustrated by the following sentence, where '*we*', '*they*' and '*I*' immediately follow one after another: "*Nous avons délibéré, nous, ils, je, accorés et illuminés, d'admettre que l'origine n'est pas une Création mais peut-être un défaire, comme la défection fondamentale d'un absolu, les Batoutos le proposent sans insister*"³⁷¹ (SAT 95).

Despite the persistent speculations as to who belongs to the Batouto, there is a strong emphasis on their importance, to 'our reality', as the narrator insists in the introduction to the novel. As a pre-colonial African community living roughly 500 BCE somewhere in the centre of the African continent, the Batouto are said to be the ones, 'who have taught us the chaos and the contradictions of the world' (SAT 19). Again, this evocation of a collective identity is not primarily opposed to a 'they'. It is rather tied to a particular relation with the world: "*Tu nais batouto, mais je le deviens aussi. C'est-à-dire, au fur et à mesure que cette diversité se réalise. L'héritage ne fonde ni sur le droit du sol ni sur le droit d'aïnesse ni sur quelque exclusive de cette sorte. Raison pourquoi les Batoutos nous hantent, invisibles qu'ils sont*"³⁷² (SAT 89).

The contradiction between their invisibility on the one hand and their unquestioned existence on the other is a fundamental trait of the Batouto (SAT 38), and can be read quite literally as an expression of Rancière's charge that literature intervenes in the 'distribution of the perceptible of what is visible and invisible' (1.2.2.). In the narrative, the Batoutos' invisibility exists on several

371 "We have deliberated, we, them, I, confident and illuminated, in admitting that in the beginning was not a Creation but perhaps a defeat, a defection from an absolute, the Batoutos propose it without insisting", my translation.

372 "You are born batouto, but I am also becoming one. That is to say, as this diversity is slowly realising itself. Inheritance is not based neither on the right of birthplace nor on the right of blood, or any such exclusive notion. That is why the Batoutos haunt us, invisible as they are", my translation.

layers. On a global scale, Africa is considered to be the 'great invisible' (SAT 48). On a regional level, Onkolo the town of the Batouto, is located in a region of Africa whose exact position is unknown and invisible and inaccessible to colonial officers (SAT 15). And on the level of the actual town, Onkolo is described as being situated partly in the forest and partly in the savannah, a position which re-emphasises the double-bind between the visible and the invisible, opacity and transparency (SAT 46). The fact that this kind of invisibility need not be equated with weakness, but can just as well be seen a strategic (military) advantage, is expressed in an analogy presented by the sage Séléno in the novel when he says: “*Vous ne voyez pas un village d'un seul coup, ni dans le village une maison d'un seul coup. Mais c'est le couteau qui d'un coup vous blesse ou vous tue*”³⁷³ (SAT 45). This imagery once more conjures up the strategic importance of the forest as a hideout for maroons, which Glissant identified as a model for the opacity of Afro-Caribbean literary production in *Le discours antillais* (4.2.2.). The invisibility of the maroon is, in this context, both a result of the violence inflicted by the plantation system as it is a chosen political strategy, albeit chosen under extreme duress.

Although, as elaborated in 1.2.2., one of the political tasks of literature – according to Rancière, lies in its ability to render the invisible visible by intervening in the 'distribution of the perceptible', *Sartorius* voices a note of caution against attempts of rendering the Batouto visible since it could take the form of a violation of the Batouto's 'right to opacity'. To the question of the eight-year-old Mathieu – who in this passage could refer to Glissant's son, as well as to the fictional character (3.3.) –, about why one would want to reveal the Batouto's history if they want to remain unseen (SAT 301), the narrator responds, “*qu'aujourd'hui les Batoutos se laissent deviner par nous, parce qu'il n'est plus un lieu du monde qui soit invisible absolument, et que seuls nos aveuglements sans voyance nous empêchent de le concevoir*”³⁷⁴ (SAT 301). As I mentioned in the preface, Glissant in this instance, as with *Sartorius* as a whole, insisted that 'the time had come' to render the Batouto visible, at least in the (still relatively secretive or opaque) realm of literature. What is at stake in making their story accessible to a larger readership is the possibility of imagining a different kind of world-community after the projects of nation-states and Western cosmopolitanism have relied on exclusive and closed conceptions of communities and effectively prevented the development of a relational imaginary.

What is in the Batouto name? Signalétique vs. Genealogy

I have already mentioned the significance Glissant accorded to the practice of naming above as an act of freedom and literary creativity that he closely associated with the tradition of

373 “ You do not see the whole village at once, and in the village not the house, and in the house you don't see the knife at first sight. But it's the knife that can suddenly kill you”, my translation.

374 “today we can make out the Batoutos because there is no place left on earth that remains completely invisible, and it is only our unseeing blindness that prevents us from conceiving it”, my translation.

marronage. In *Sartorius*, the politics of naming is further elaborated through a repeated engagement with the symbolic or mythical relevance the narrator accords to particular letters in the Batouto name. The word 'ba-tout-o' appears to be, for example, made up of the prefix 'ba' existing in the names of several African nations – as in Bapedi, Balози, Batswana or Basotho – 'tout' – French for 'all' or 'whole' – and an 'o' at the end to give the sound of the name an added emphasis. A first reading would therefore invite an interpretation of the name as an 'African sounding people of the whole (world)'. Another attempt of deciphering the name could pursue the possible allusions to the novel by the Martinican novelist René Maran (1921). Receiving the Prix Goncourt in 1921, *Batouala – Véritable Roman Nègre* (Batouala – A True Black Novel) was written by Maran after he had been working as an administrator in the French Central African.³⁷⁵ Like Maran, Glissant moved to Africa with *Sartorius*, albeit only in the imagination. Towards the end of *Sartorius*, the narrator unsettles both of these interpretations by hinting at the purely coincidental origins of the Batouto name by referring to a surname of a former school teacher of Glissant whose name was 'Madame El Battouty' (OD 234). This anecdote can, once again, be seen as forming part of Glissant's practice of mixing fiction and non-fiction in ways that unsettle any permanent sense of certainty concerning the boundaries between the two.

Sartorius, moreover, includes extensive speculations regarding the meaning of the letter 'o' at the end of all Batouto names. These 'o's, as in Odonon or Oko, are said add a particular rhythm to the palavers in Onkolo, and are to be repeated twice for that reason (Odonon Odonon) (SAT 39-40). It is also said to symbolise the shape of a circle, or an abyss, 'the most just resolution' (SAT 53), the world, the earth, or the universe (SAT 349). In *Ormerod*, which was published four years after *Sartorius*, this question is taken up again when Apocal asks Nestor'o about the 'o' at the end of his name. Nestor'o, who resembles Mathieu and Glissant and thus features as another mélange of fiction and life-writing in Glissant's work, responds to this query by saying, “*Même, ils auraient pu vous avoir rebaptisé plus tard, Y comme ce Malcolm, Nestor'x, ou Z comme dans ce film grec, hein, Nestor'zed. Serait-il que vous soyez un Batouto? Seuls les Batoutos ont usage de l'o... [...] L'o et le zéro ne se distinguent pas, ils montrent l'invisible...*”³⁷⁶ (OD 355). Nestor'o's response adds an explicit political dimension to this speculation, by establishing a direct connection between the Batouto and the black power movement in the US. Whereas the X adopted by the members of the Nation of Islam was an active erasure of a colonial name and stood for the African family name that its members could not find, – for Malcolm X “X' replaced the white slavemaster name of 'Little'

³⁷⁵The novel became highly influential in the transatlantic black circles at the onset of the 'New Negro' movement that in part inspired the Harlem Renaissance (Edwards 2015, 69).

³⁷⁶“They could have also rebaptised you later on, X like this Malcolm, Nestor'x, or Z like in this Greek film, no, Nestor'zed. But if you are a Batouto? Only the Batouto use the o... [...] The o and the zero cannot be distinguished from one another. They show the invisible”, my translation.

which some blue-eyed devil named Little had imposed upon my paternal forebears“ (1999, 229) – the o of the Batouto does not carry the same militant connotations. Instead, it could be seen as expressing a worldview that is culturally ingrained and has a strong 'worldly' tendency.

In another elaboration of the implications of letters like 'o' and 'x', *Sartorius* also includes a scene in which the character Wilhelm Sartoris is asked by a US-American immigration officer to state his full name, which the officer in turn shortens, translates or misunderstands as “William Sartoris”.³⁷⁷ As the narrator of *Sartoris* goes on to speculate, the 'u' that had gone missing from Wilhelm's surname as a result of the immigration officers' arbitrary decision, was the same 'u' that the author William Faulkner later added to his family name 'Faulkner'. In this manner, a symbolic relation is established on the level of the sign, between the purely fictional account of the ship journey and a celebrated American author. These links, and the narrator's consideration that the 'u' shares some of the same 'imposing characteristics' of the letter 'o', (“*Les u sont imposants, tout autant que les o. Ils ouvrent sur un ciel dont vous n'augurez pas s'il est maudit ou de bénédiction*”³⁷⁸ SAT 269-70) is an expression of what Glissant terms '*signalétique*'. *Signalétique* differs from genealogy in that it is a study of the relatedness of signs, not genes. For Glissant it presents the possibility of escaping from genealogy: “*Bonheur d'échapper à la chaîne de filiation, pour relater enfin dans les cinq directions en même temps*”³⁷⁹ (SAT 305). On another level of analysis, this anecdote also forcefully illustrates the impact of migration in the larger dynamic of creolisation. Through incessant movements across the globe, the names of people are (mis)translated and adjusted to the various languages of the receiving communities. In the process it became increasingly difficult, if not outright impossible, to define one's biological genealogy with any certainty. The process that, for Glissant, began violently with the slave trade continues in *Sartorius* also in more contemporary forms of historic erasure. Instead of tracing back an exclusive single root history, this mode of relation opens up 'in five directions at the same time'.

The speculation about specific symbolic importance of letters like o, x and u also evokes the importance of the notion of the 'cipher' in transatlantic black culture. Whereas a cipher usually denotes the figure zero, or a secret message or code carrying symbolic meanings,³⁸⁰ thus neatly overlapping with Glissant's usage, the term has taken on added significance in the Hip Hop community where it “denotes both a circle, a number, a group of rappers, as well as a contramodern site of ontological revision and dissent” (Ganesh 2016, 112), with a genealogy that connects African and Asian “ontologies in order to challenge the inferiority of the non-white subject in Western

377The importance of this story is emphasised by the title of the novel, which is named after the Sartorius family, whose members change their surnames at several occasions throughout the novel from Sartor to Sartorius and to Sartoris.

378“They open up to a sky that you cannot guess whether it is damned or blessed”, my translation.

379“the joy of fleeing from filiation, and the possibility of relating, at last, in five directions at the same time”, my translation.

380See <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cipher>.

modernity” (112). In the realm of literary theory, this kind of secret code or double entendre that binds a secret community together has also been theorised by Henry Louis Gates Jr in his book *The Signifying Monkey* (1988), which studies how African traditions have been orally passed on across the Americas and the Caribbean to form a distinct black literary tradition. The distinct political quality of this tradition is that, while other realms of political representations were historically closed, literature became one of the primary realms in which black people could assert their humanity and rights.

While Glissant's imagination of the Batouto people indirectly alludes to these modes of forming and maintaining a community, something else seems to be at stake. Instead of framing the history of the Batouto after the slave trade and the uprootment brought about by it, the decision to attribute a primordial 'vocation to invisibility' that Glissant dated to time before colonisation points towards a deeply engrained cultural sensitivity – instead of a response or mode of resistance against white domination and enslavement. In order to study this aspect further I will describe their way of life and social structures in the following.

The Batouto Way of Life

In the neo-ethnographic descriptions of the Batouto community in *Sartorius*, Glissant portrayed the ancient Batouto community as a peace-loving, humble nation that lives harmoniously and in a radically interrelated way with nature. They are said to share an 'appetite for silence' (SAT 60), an 'enormous desire to share' (SAT 64), and an indifference towards great individual achievements, believing instead that more meaningful expressions of genius can be found in ordinary daily business (SAT 30, 96). Although this depiction rehearses the trope of the 'noble savage' applied to Indigenous peoples in colonial anthropological literature, a trope that has also been negatively associated with the Négritude tradition, these overly romantic renditions of traditional communal life also refer back to Glissant's earlier stated belief in how the epics of traditional communities (“those that have been formed traditionally, around the fireside”) constitute, when seen together, the basis for a new epic of the world-community. Glissant's immediate association between Indigenous or so-called 'pre-modern' African communities and the kind of worldliness he espoused can also be seen as referring back to a set of debates taking place in the context of African philosophy around relational ontologies such as *ubuntu*, mentioned above in the context of Jean-Luc Nancy's conceptualisation of communities (4.1.1.), and how they share fundamental character traits with Glissant's philosophy of relation (see 1.4.1.). Often associated with the image of an idealised precolonial image of an African village, such as the one Glissant conjured up in *Sartorius*, *ubuntu* has been thought of as a particular kind of communitarian ethics, in which the desires of the individual are relegated below the needs of the community, whereas, on

an economic level, it strives for self-sufficiency and modesty. On the Batouto's basic sociality or interconnectedness and their willingness to submit themselves to a higher communitarian purpose, Glissant wrote:

*“Chacun d’eux accepte de subir et d’endurer, il adopte la malédiction qui s’est envenimée autour de lui, dans les pays où il va, et à laquelle sa solitude l’a convié. Mais il n’oublie pas le soin que prend la communauté, qu’elle s’élève à Onkoloo ou qu’elle continue ailleurs, de considérer d’abord ce chemin de tous qui mène à Élééné!”*³⁸¹ (SAT 137).

The notions of 'suffering' and 'enduring' reiterate once more the vocabulary Glissant used in his characterisation of the fictional character Mycéa (3.2.1., 3.2.2.) and the central theme he identified in William Faulkner's depiction of the black population in the US-American South (FM). The spirituality defining the lives of the fictional Batouto people is directed at their gods *Élééné*. In contrast to monotheistic religions, which Glissant conceptually equated with a potentially dangerous belief in 'the One' and considered to be a main cause of exclusive conceptions of identity, as well as one of the key factors of genocidal violence (IPD 90), the gods of the Batouto only exist in the plural. As he imagines, these gods know neither the future nor the past, they neither give to nor take away from the community, instead 'privileging the passage towards multiplicity' (SAT 96). As the sentence continues, it turns into a direct address to an unspecified 'you' implicating the reader: *“Vous approchez les dieux comme vous envisagez le monde, avec une légèreté soupçonneuse ou tragique, et pour l’étonnant plaisir de la diversité”*³⁸² (SAT 91).

The Batouto Polis and Odonno's Journey into the Tout-Monde

The establishment of the Batouto town of Onkolo takes place after a conflict between those wanting to settle and those who want to continue leading a nomadic life. The group advocating to stay wins the argument by insisting that they will not take the land from anyone but that they will 'frequent it like their sister' (SAT 25), thus reiterating a commitment to non-violence in relation with the environment as well. In a rare engagement with the concept of direct democracy in his fictional work, which is of particular interest due to the disciplinary lens of this research, Glissant described the palaver as the central political and social institution in Onkolo. The palaver is depicted as a parliament that is open to everyone, men and women, and a forum where philosophical matters as well as everyday disputes are discussed and the history of the community is passed on through story-telling. In the chapter *Onkoloo* this central social institution is described in the following manner, which I will cite at length due its importance for the discussion in the ensuing chapter:

“C’est une sourde monotonie, que traversent par en dessous des éclat secrets, et en surface des tons

381 “Each of them accepts to suffer and to endure, taking on the curse that has wrecked havoc all around, in all the countries he goes to, and to which his solitude has invited him. But he does not forget the care the community takes, whether in Onkoloo or elsewhere, to first consider the path of all that leads to *Élééné*!”

382 “you approach the gods like you see the world, with a sceptical or tragic lightness, and for the surprising pleasure of diversity”, my translation.

*aigus qui se précipitent. Beaucoup d'entre nous ont appris là leurs manières de dire. Et pour rompre peut-être ce lourd élan, la palabre s'est établie. Elle croise les voix, les délie et les renforce. Nous nous plaisons à ces parlements, qui dévorent nos énergies. Aucune palabre n'équivaut à aucune autre. Si elles ont été instituées pour raviver la parole et pour en sceller l'accent, il arrive qu'elles la laissent diminuer jusqu'au silence, alors chacun se retire doucement sans demander ce qu'il en résulte. Leur secret vient de ce que tout le monde les entend, non pas seulement ceux qui y participent, mais ceux aussi qui travaillent au loin ou se reposent là tout près, ce temps du dire les réunit, et aussi bien ceux qui divaguent déjà dans l'ailleurs que ceux qui demeureront pour toujours ici-là*³⁸³ (SAT 32-33).

The fictional account of the Batouto's central democratic institution continues over the following page by enumerating all the parts of society that are somehow involved in the debates (“*Les enfant écoutent de loin [...] D'autres lisent dans l'avenir [...] D'autres communique le savoir, qui est presque toujours une mémoire endormie puis rallumée à grande voix éblouie. D'autres sont pour rêver tout simplement*”³⁸⁴, SAT 33-34), thereby reflecting the radically inclusive social and epistemological nature of these discussion. Not only are the workers and children listening from near or far, the palavers also accords space for 'knowledge based on a memory of the past' and 'dreams', such as it was cherished by Glissant's philosophy of history (2.2.). The rendition of this practice of radical democracy can easily be dismissed as overly romantic. Several scholars have however made the case for the democratic quality of the palaver in African societies. In *Democracy and Consensus in African Traditional Politics – A Plea for a Non-party Polity* (2000), Kwasi Wiredu, for example, put forward the argument that, in contrast to postcolonial democratic systems based on the mechanism of elected majorities and minorities, precolonial African societies arrived at political decisions through a consensus (Diagne 2015, 75). Godefroy Bidima offered a similar argument to Wiredu when he proposed to rethink the African idea of palaver as a way of developing a 'local conception of justice' in which populations could recognise themselves and (re)constitute a genuine public space beyond the discourse on the democratic state that was to follow the neocolonial state (4), a debate I will revisit at a later point (5.4.).

Another noteworthy characteristic of the Batouto polis is the equal political rights accorded to men and women, notwithstanding their different social roles. While Batouto men are mainly 'oriented to the exterior', the women take on the role of maintaining life and culture in Onkolo, both

³⁸³“There is a dull monotony, underneath which hidden outbursts pass, and on the surface urgent rushing sounds. Many of us have learned our ways of talking from this. And perhaps to break this heavy movement, the palaver is established. It makes voices cross one another, unties them and gives them strength. We like these parliaments that devour our energies. No palaver is like an other. If they have been established to revive the word and strengthen the accent, it sometimes happens that they go on until there is silence, then each one withdraws gently without asking what the outcome was. Their secret comes from the fact that everyone hears them, not only those who participate in them, but also those who work far away or rest there nearby, these times of talking brings them together, those who already wander on the other side as well as those who will stay here forever”, my translation.

³⁸⁴“Children listen from afar [...] Others tell the future [...] Others pass on knowledge, which is almost always a memory that is asleep and lit up again by a dazzled voice. Others are there just to dream“, my translation.

through their 'anterior knowledge', and their roles as teachers (SAT 82), but above all as keepers of a mystical secret that is symbolised by the silver bracelet of Odon's mother (SAT 53-54), that is praised by the community as a mysterious 'stone-pact' that 'resists in its opacity' (SAT 125). The fundamental difference between Batouto men and women is symbolically underlined by the fact that their names end with either one or two o's. In what is both an affirmation and inversion of traditional gender hierarchies in Glissant's work of fiction, the relationship between Batouto men and women is depicted as a 'natural balance', in which women maintain an air of superiority over men, by 'keeping their secrets to themselves' (SAT 27).³⁸⁵ The female Batoutos, are considered to be the part of the community that most actively creates relations with the surrounding towns through a strong tradition of intermarriage (SAT 44). As a result, in a process of creolisation, the original Batouto language dissolves slowly into other African languages, among which Peul, Bambara and Wolof are explicitly named (SAT 106).

The link between the ancient and modern Batouto people is created via the character of Odon, who is the first recorded ancestor of Mycéa, whose centrality for Glissant's fictional oeuvre I have studied in the previous chapter (3.2.).³⁸⁶ In *Sartorius*, Odon's story is narrated from when he was five years old and discovered as a god-chosen storyteller or 'poet' in Glissant's terminology (SAT 39). By divine blessing, he is able to teach the community about its own history despite his young age (SAT 40). His capability of seeing more than others resembles Mycéa's visionary qualities and is re-emphasised by his discovery of a mysterious pond that looks like an 'o', evoking the secret code or cipher for wordliness mentioned above in the form of *a secret location* within the *secret existence* of the Batoutos (SAT 52).

When he first appears at a palaver, Odon recounts the Odyssey of Oko, one of the town's founding fathers (SAT 108-10): Oko left Onkolo to the north and left Anandoo behind. The separation between two lovers, the one staying and the other one leaving, creates a tension or an 'invisible relation' (SAT 58) that in part echoes the relationship between Mycéa and Mathieu. On his journey across the savannah, Oko engraved signs called *Kwamés* into stones (SAT 66). Eventually, these visible traces transform into invisible ones and are equated with the spread of creole language along the routes of Odon's journey into the world. These linguistic traces are considered as indicators that would allow the community to follow its movement of branching out into the world. Several generations after Oko, Odon becomes the first to break with this tradition when he is

³⁸⁵This aspect, along with the ones mentioned earlier (3.2.3), could be cast as expressing a kind of difference feminism, developed in American feminist debates in the 1980s and 1990s, or as expressing an idea of complementary gender forces reflecting a cosmological balance associated with certain strands of African feminist thought (Nzegwu 1994). In the context of Glissant's work, the maintenance of naturalised gender binaries appears incompatible with the larger thrust of his philosophy of relation and warrants to be further studied.

³⁸⁶Odon's landing in Martinique is dated "1715?" in the Appendix of *La Case du commandeur*, because the precise date remains unknown.

caught by slave traders (SAT 41). His disappearance marks a sudden rupture in Batouto history.

The largely ethnographic descriptions of the Batouto as a distinct 'ethnic group' end at this point, and give way to the depiction of Odon's personal trajectory which links Africa, North America and the Caribbean. His individual journey, during which he leaves the *Kwamé* traces of the Batouto, represent the spread of the Batouto spirit, from Africa into an increasingly creolising world. During his epic travels from Africa to the Caribbean, Odon is at one point depicted as fighting against the colonisers on the side of Indigenous peoples in North America, whose names are enumerated over an entire page (SAT 120-121). In them, he recognises a people with a similar sensibility or knowledge of the world in them, a nation that, like the Batouto, is capable of seeing the invisible (SAT 122). By pointing out the compatibility between the Batouto world-view and those of other Indigenous peoples, Glissant again expresses his belief that 'oppressed atavistic cultures are best able to demonstrate relation', a view he also mentioned in *Faulkner, Mississippi* (FM 196).

Founding New Onkolos Elsewhere

Following the depiction of the original Onkolo, the narrative dedicated to the Batouto in *Sartorius* skips three centuries after Odon's 'movement into the world'. It continues from around the 18th century, when the emergence of the Tout-Monde is physically felt in Onkolo when Odon's pond starts to 'tremble' (SAT 229). In a final palaver at the end of the novel, the young Batoutos leave and make their way into the world, founding 'new Onkolos elsewhere' (SAT 321). The theme of branching out into the world directly links with a general view towards Africa's vocation to spread multiplicity into the world proposed by Glissant in Manthia Diawara's film (2009). In the sequence Glissant addressed some of the conceptual and historic implications of pre-colonial Africa as a sort of nucleus for world-communities, without explicitly referring to *Sartorius* or the Batouto:

“Diawara: 'What does departure mean to you?'

Glissant: 'It's the moment when one consents not to be a single being and attempts to be many beings at the same time. In other words, for me every diaspora is the passage from unity to multiplicity. I think that's what's important in all the movements of the world, and we, the descendants, who have arrived from the other shore would be wrong to cling fiercely to this singularity which had accepted to go out into the world. Let us not forget that Africa has been the source of all kinds of diasporas — not only the forced diaspora imposed by the West through the slave trade, but also of millions of all types of diasporas before — that have populated the world. One of Africa's vocations is to be a kind of foundational Unity which develops and transforms itself into a Diversity. And it seems to me that, if we don't think about that properly, we won't be able to understand what we ourselves can do, as participants in this African diaspora, to help the world to realize its true self, in other words its multiplicity, and to respect itself as such“ (Diawara and Glissant, 2011, 5).

Although the primordial community of Onkolo is depicted as a unit, this unity eventually

gives way to a diversity that is already inherent in their worldview and spreads across the world through migration movements of its members. The kind of world-community created by the Batouto thus differs from the African diaspora or a transnational black community. As a global culture it is not marked as much by the trauma inflicted by the rupture of the slave trade as it carries a relational world-view into the world that is espoused by all kinds of people. The type of 'world-community' Glissant created with the Batouto in the realm of fiction, is thus an 'imagined community' only in the sense that Glissant dreamed it up. Whereas the citizens of Onkolo formed a traditional political community that is tied by strong social networks, a shared belief-system and ties of blood and soil, the essentially relational ontology of their belief system spreads to their surrounding communities, through a practice of migration and intermarriage. The violence of the slave trade triggers or amplifies this movement, but, in Glissant's imagination, the tradition of valuing 'change through exchange' was ingrained in the Batouto culture from the start. Due to the lack of any conflict in this mythical past, the community is not formed through exclusion or in opposition to another group. Its main aims are not expansion but survival and being able to live in accordance with their beliefs. Its worldliness is not dependent on having travelled across the globe or endorsing an explicit cosmopolitan project – again bearing similarities to what I framed as Mycéa's black cosmopolitanism (3.2.1.). Rather, it is contained as much in their name, the 'people of the whole', as in their attributes which Glissant casts as an embodiment of his philosophy of relation. As a new founding myth, the fictional story of Onkolo above all suggests the vision of an African village as a point of origin for a particular brand of cosmopolitanism. It is a cosmopolitanism that the Batoutos themselves are not aware of, a cosmopolitanism that Glissant single-handedly attributes to whom he considers to be a descendant of the Batouto, and a cosmopolitanism that readers can actively choose to identify with. Although the story of Onkolo is one of the collapse of social structures, forcing the Batouto to abandon their ancient home-base, the tension between staying and leaving has always been at the core of the Batouto identity, meaning that the eventual disappearance of Onkolo is not cast as a catastrophe. Within the larger process of creolisation they form the 'salt of relation' (3.3.2.) and are best equipped to survive on their journeys into what Glissant conceived as the whirlwind of the chaos-world.

The conceptual overlap between the Batouto way of life and Glissant's central concepts is evident, for example, by assigning the multiple roles of 'the poet', 'the fighter' and 'the relator' to the fictional character of Odon – characteristics that I have previously associated with the fictional figures of Mycéa, Mathieu and Thaël (3.3.2.) –, the novel casts him as a primordial embodiment of a politics of relation.

With regards to what appears to be a communitarian thrust marking the ancient Batouto

community – one that is at odds with the more elusive nature of Glissantian communities discussed so far –, it is important to note that the narrative depicting their history at no point implies a dissolution of singular beings into a great collective in which a sense of individuality no longer exists. The characters shaping the fate of the community, for instance through the debates at the great palaver, are named and described in their relations to one another. Like the other characters in Glissant's fiction, they are not depicted as complex personalities but rather as allegorical figures standing for, or rather embodying specific political roles. On a formal and structural level, the importance placed on their respective individuality is emphasised by the fact that some of their individual stories occupy entire sub-chapters carrying their names. This individualist dimension is further amplified in the search for contemporary Batoutos, to which I will turn next.

4.3.2. 'The Batouto Are Among Us' – The Poet's Task of Identifying Contemporary Batoutos

This sub-section deals with the way Glissant established links between the epic story of the Batouto with their mythical origins in Onkolo and the project of a contemporary 'world-community'. It, moreover, describes the moment in Glissant's oeuvre where the divisions between fiction and non-fiction begin to blur once more, when traditional conceptions of identity dissolve and where discerning who is and who is not a Batouto becomes a question of research and speculation based on intuition.

Within the bracket of the historical narrative of the Batouto community, *Sartorius* presents the life stories of several individuals, who are alluded to as being Batouto. Their narratives are set, among others, in Germany, Senegal, Hungary, France, Argentina and Namibia. As this geographic dispersion indicates, the Batouto have spread across the globe and form an 'invisible nation of several thousands' (SAT 319-20). Regarding its main characteristics, the narrator points out that this invisible nation is neither aware of its collective Batouto identity, nor of the existence of a Batouto people. Instead of remaining at the paradoxical level of a 'community without community', which I discussed with respect to the work of Nancy above (4.1.1.), the question of finding out who is a Batouto and who is not, becomes a central task, turning into an obsessive search for the narrators and fictional characters in Glissant's novels *Sartorius* and *Ormerod*.

As the final scene of *Sartorius* illustrates, it would be futile to search for Batoutos by appearance, nationality, political allegiance or on a particular side of a political conflict. The epic of the Batouto era in Onkolo ends when a young relative of the Batouto is shown as wandering aimlessly through the forests of Rwanda at the time of the genocide, “*repartait dans toutes les directions à la fois, rassemblant la nation*”³⁸⁷ (SAT 334). She first joins a group of Tutsis and barely

387 “left again in all directions at once, assembling the nation”, my translation.

escapes an attack on a church. Shortly thereafter she joins a group of Hutus fleeing from armed Tutsis seeking revenge. Set in one of the most violent conflicts of the 20th century, her trajectory across the frontline demonstrates with particular rhetoric force, that Batoutos do not share particular physical or racial attributes that would make them identifiable. In a conversation among friends that is situated 'outside' of the fragmented narratives of *Sartorius*, there is a repeated insistence that there are Batoutos among the Chinese as much as among the Tibetans, among the Irish as much as among the English, among Arabs as much as among Jews (SAT 276-77). As a 'people' that exists in the contemporary moment, the Batouto's only characteristic is that they have an 'intuition of the living totality of the world' (OD 168). The invisible Batouto nation has therefore, “*aucun pouvoir, il n'intervient nulle part, il n'a ni armée ni finances, aucun reporter ne rapporte où son territoire commence, où il finit. Les Batoutos sont parmi nous*”³⁸⁸ (SAT 275).

The task of identifying a Batouto therefore requires a particular intuition, comparable to Glissant's historiographic method (2.2.). On the part of the one who might be a Batouto, it requires 'a vague feeling of belonging' that can never be turned into a certainty.³⁸⁹ Reading the traces of what I have earlier referred to above as the method of *signalétique*, of reading hidden traces, or signs, is the only option left. Considering the way Glissant describes characters like Nestor'o, there are strong indicators that he – along with his other main fictional characters of Mathieu, Mycéa and Thaël –, considered himself to form part of the Batouto community. In *Ormerod*, Nestor'o is for example described in terms resembling the characteristics of the ancient Batouto people: “*solitaire choisissait la mer [...] il ne cherchait pas la différence, d'un de ces pays à l'autre [...] plutôt voulait-il confondre, mélanger la forme et la voyance et les mille d'odeurs d'eau et d'aridité d'un Morne à l'autre*”³⁹⁰ (OD 73). Nestor'o, who adopts the o to his surname relatively late in the narrative of *Ormerod* perhaps standing for a growth of relational consciousness on his part, is both certain and uncertain about his Batouto identity when he says: “*Nous ne sommes plus seulement incapables de connaître des Batoutos, nous entreprenons de médire d'eux et d'interpréter leur absence au regard de nos manques*”³⁹¹ (OD 74). What triggers the obsessive search and speculation around the Batouto is not made explicit in either *Sartorius* or *Ormerod*. From several passages, as well as from the general considerations mentioned at the beginning of this section, there are however several indications that they are *what's missing*, what could *unite*, or provide a new sense of community to the otherwise dispersed and erring characters of Glissant's fictional characters. Just

388 “no power, it does not intervene anywhere, it has no army, no finances, no reporter tells us where its territory begins, or where it ends. The Batoutos are among us”, my translation.

389 Nestor'o, one of the main characters in *Ormerod*, points to an added complexity in this endeavour when he speculates that they perhaps “exchanged each other's stories like Apocal and Nestor'o, or the young Godby in 1944”, my translation.

390 “solitary opting for the sea [...] he didn't look for differences between one country to another [...] he wanted rather to confound, mix the form and the vision and the thousand smells of the water and of the aridity of one Morne to another”, my translation.

391 “We are not only incapable of knowing the Batoutos we are even speaking badly about them, interpreting their absence through our own lack”, my translation.

like the inability to know the 'land-before' is repeatedly associated with the curse haunting the islands and the loss of mental balance of characters in Glissant's fictional oeuvre, *finding the Batouto* people promises to be a missing link that could relate the individual characters, their history and their futures in the Tout-Monde.

The certainty of knowing or feeling the presence of the Batouto is destabilised throughout *Ormerod*, as is the decision whether 'we' or 'you' are part of them. The task appears to be an impossible one when the narrator speculates that they were “*désignées pour deviner en ces temps présents inextricables ce que serait un peuple que vous respirez, mais que vous voyez pas. Un peuple qui a choisi que tu ne le voies pas*”³⁹² (OD 168). The Batoutos' invisibility *by choice*, which this quote explicitly evokes, implies a strong sense of agency on the part of this imagined and fictional community, a choice that fundamentally differs from the *systematically invisibilised* minorities to whom Glissant referred in the quote at the onset of this section. Here, invisibility is a strategic choice that is maintained by a seemingly paradoxical community that does not know it exists. Again, just as in Glissant's paradoxical phrase of a non-totalitarian totality, this community does not have to be discarded as an impossibility or a paradox. Instead the 'uncertain science', recommended by Glissant as a method of identifying a Batouto, implies that the collective Batouto identity has to maintain a balance between certainty and uncertainty. This is illustrated when the narrative turns to more abstract speculations of how landscapes, fish or mosquito could be considered having Batouto qualities (SAT 274). Another striking passage in *Ormerod*, which is of additional interest with regards to my focus on marronage, is a conversation between Orestile and his friends:

“*Qu'est-ce qu'un kwamé ..., demanda-t-elle.*”

- *C'est la marque des Batoutos...*

- *Qu'est-ce qu'un Batouto..., soupira-t-elle.*

- *C'est le peuple que vous ne voyez pas...*

- *Les Marrons sont des Batoutos..., murmura-t-elle avec provocation.*

- *Ils le sont peut-être, et ils ne le sont pas...*³⁹³ (OD 201).

Whether the Maroons are Batoutos or not is not finally resolved in this exchange. What is, however, certain is that in historical terms maroons were particularly apt at operating with invisibility as a political strategy in response to the violence exercised by the plantation regime. The difference between historical maroons and the Batoutos being that they do not choose invisibility in response to a political aggression or threat, operating in the underground so to speak. Throughout *Ormerod* the impression is created that their vocation to see the invisible makes them prone to live

392“destined to foresee in the present inextricable moment what a people would be that you breath but cannot see. A people that has chosen that you do not see it“, my translation.

393“What is a Kwame..., she asked, It's the sign of the Batouto..., What is a Batouto.... she sighed, It's the people that you cannot see..., The maroons are Batoutos... she murmured provocatively, They are and they are not“, my translation.

in another realm that is not visible to historical or social scientific observation. This character trait once more alludes to the Batouto's deep cultural roots in African cosmologies, and a valorisation of multiplicity that is present in all kinds of people.

Batouto Personalities and Their Relations

Although it is in the very nature of the Batouto that one can never really 'grasp' them, there are instances in which there is a greater degree of certainty about *what it means to be or become Batouto* in Sartorius and Ormerod.

One of the areas that Glissant refers to frequently with regards to the Batouto is music. As 'the art of the invisible', and 'a science of the unapproachable' the narrative repeatedly alludes to a Batouto spirituality (OD 296) embodied by musicians like Ibrahim Ferrer's *Buena Vista Social Club* (OD 75), a (fictional?) Brazilian music group called *Os Batoutos* (OD 295), or global icons like the reggae singer Bob Marley. Along with the maroon communities referred to above, the Rastafari movement appears as another candidate for a Batouto community, when the narrator in passing ponders the possibility of: “*Tout un pays batouto. Comme vous diriez par exemple, tout un pays Rastafari, pacifique, végétarien, obstiné, planant doucement à coté du monde*”³⁹⁴ (OD 320). With regards to traditional notions of community, these dispersed formulations come closest to the kind of 'closed' traditional community from which Britton would like to dissociate Glissant's conception of communities (2008). The political implications of this phrase could, however just as well, be read as Glissant exploring the potentials of traditional, place- or- island bound, communities *in addition* to the kind of spiritual world communities that I associate with his work on the Batouto. Again, instead of perceiving any singular model of community to be superior over another, this kind of reading would perceive Glissant's political practice to (potentially) endorse different kind of models simultaneously, in a non-exclusivist manner.

The emphasis placed on historical figures in Sartorius might imply that belonging to the Batouto might be the exclusive privilege of a chosen few 'geniuses'. This impression can, for example, be evoked in the case of the German artist Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528). In the chapter devoted to Dürer, the fictional narrative alludes to his coat of arms, which depicted the head of a young African man at its centre, as cause to imagine a narrative in which Dürer collaborates together with a black alchemist called Areko, who remains invisible to Dürer's contemporaries. Although it is never made explicit in the text itself, Dürer's wood-cutting technique of erasing from the material what only becomes visible in the process of printing, made be considered another element making him particularly prone to developing a sensibility for the invisible. In the case of Anton Wilhelm Amo (1703 – 1759), who was sold as a slave on the Gold Coast and eventually

³⁹⁴“A whole Batouto country. Like you would say a Rastafari country, pacifist, vegetarian, persisting, living peacefully at the edge of the world“, my translation.

worked as philosopher in Jena, a chapter titled *Amo* in *Sartorius* refers to passages of his philosophical treatise, in which Amo suggested a 'multiplicity of temporal flows', and a 'conjunction of these flows at meeting points in future humanities', as indicators that he might have been 'a prophet of creolisation' (SAT 219),.

The prominence of artists and intellectuals notwithstanding, 'batouteness' should not be considered as an identity that is reserved for an educated elite. *Sartorius*, in this vein, also dedicates individual sub-chapters to collectives, such the Herero people, the Batutsis, or the inhabitants of KwaMashu, a South African township (see also illustration 5). This selection of cases alludes once more to the proximity between the relationality espoused by Indigenous peoples across the world, and the Batouto belief system. Odon's fight on the side of Indigenous peoples in North America, mentioned above, have alluded into this direction. *Ormerod* also includes a passage where the singular expression harboured by an Indigenous Chilean community is taken as proof for their affiliation to the Batoutos. The fact that, instead of "you repulse me" they say "*mon cœur n'arrive plus à percevoir la beauté de ton être*"³⁹⁵ (OD 172), is taken as potential evidence of their Batouto nature. Instead of remaining at an abstract level that privileges openness over closure, diversity over mono-culturalism, these associations between fiction and non-fiction evoke a global solidarity among Indigenous movements as well as the validity of their allegedly 'pre-modern' communal forms that are, mainly, characterised by existing in a non-sovereign fashion.

4.3.3. (Re)Producing World-Communities of Readers and Writers

This sub-section shows how Glissant's community conception transitions from an archipelagic to a global realm, and from a fictional to a non-fictional realm via his critical engagement with literature and poetry. The argument I am going to support is based on the view that, in an idiosyncratic twist on the notion of world literature, Glissant established a personal canon of 'Tout-Monde literature' as effectively forming a world-community of writers. Whereas the previous two sections were mainly based on an engagement with Glissant's fictional oeuvre, the ensuing section will engage with his essayistic or editorial work, as expressions of what I have grouped as his abstract political thought. The material studied in this section is mainly his anthology of poetry *La terre, le feu, l'eau et les vents – Une anthologie de la poésie du Tout-monde* (2010, henceforth *Anthologie*), and to a lesser extent the collection of essays *L'Intention poétique* (1968). In order to identify the main specificities of Glissant's conceptual and practical work on the global community of poets emerging in these works, I will provide a brief overview of the main positions that have shaped the debate about world literature towards the end of this sub-section. This line of study serves as the basis for the following section (4.4.), in which I show how these conceptual

³⁹⁵"my heart no longer sees the beauty of your being", my translation.

ideas were shifted onto more concrete or institutional grounds by Glissant through his personal engagement for the establishment or organisation of different institutions, particularly the *UNESCO Courier* and the *International Parliament of Writers*.

Inventing a New Canon of World Literature

In order to approach the way in which Glissant developed his conception of a 'world-community of poets' it makes sense to refer back to his conception of the poet. As I have pointed out in the introduction to this thesis (1.4.1.), Glissant employed a specific notion of the 'poet' as someone who, through actions or writing, is able to link his or her own location with a conception of the world shaped by a process of creolisation. As he wrote in *L'Intention poétique* (1969) in a formulation that appears in different variations throughout his work, the role of the poet is to “*voyage aux infinis où il n'est nul pays, il ouvre plus méritée la relation, dans cet espace d'un ailleurs absolu où chacun peut tenter de le rejoindre*”³⁹⁶ (IP 23). As one of the main agents of relation, the poet's work therefore points to a conflict that exists between an 'ideal globality' to which the West would like to reduce the world through its 'systems and ideologies' invested in homogenising the cultures of the world, and what Glissant considered to be the actual 'world-totality', for which Glissant later developed the term *mondialité* (IP 29).³⁹⁷

At the start of this section I have already alluded to Glissant's reference to traditional Non-Western epics as collectively constituting a 'new poem of the world' (see 4.3.), which can not be attributed to an individual author. I interpreted this view as underlining Glissant's belief that the creation of art is, to a large extent, a collective process. This moves the poet out of his individual isolation and turns her into an ambassador for a community. Accordingly, the importance of a singular work of art gains in collective significance, in that it 'expresses the lived experience of a people opening up to the drama of relation' (IP 25). Of greater importance than the actual 'intention' of the author, or his or her personal preoccupations is the 'collective imaginary', or what could be referred to as a culturally embedded world-view, that gave rise to the author's conception of the work for Glissant (IP 36). In this regard one could speak of a communitarian aspect in Glissant's conception of literature that takes the community according to traditional criteria of a shared history, geography and practices for granted.

Although I have made the case that Glissant's personal trajectory and own life-writing practice needs to be taken into consideration as constitutive for his conception of the world as *Tout-Monde* (3.3.), one could, just as well, argue that it is from his reading of these authors that Glissant's vision of the world emerged. It is in their works of art that he first noted the existence of *lieux-*

³⁹⁶“travel to the infinities where there are no countries, instead his merits is in opening relation, this space of an absolute elsewhere where everyone can try and join him“, my translation.

³⁹⁷For the (subtle) conceptual difference between *mondialité* and *Tout-Monde* refer to 1.4.1.

communs or common-places, where 'two world-thoughts meet each other', thereby marking the moment when the solitude of the writer opens up to the field of solidarity and the moment when, for Glissant, the 'underlying unity' of the world could be sensed. Looking more closely at the project of the *Anthologie* allows for a better understanding of the vision of the world Glissant derived from his particular reading practice and the notion of community corresponding to it. I will limit this study to an interrogation of the authors, structures and orders of these two books, rather than an in-depth reading of their works and Glissant's commentary on them.

A Whole-World Hall of Fame – La terre, le feu, l'eau, et les vents

Glissant's Anthology of the Tout-Monde *La Terre, le feu, l'eau, et les vents* (2010) once more took up the notion of the 'submarine unity' of the world, and the common-place created by poets, as “*L'étendue du poème n'est pas infinie, il rencontre tout de suite les autres poèmes du monde, en un lieu évident et secret que tout poème donne à pressentir*”³⁹⁸ (ATM 13). It can be seen both as the apex of his poetic work, as well as the steady continuation of a work begun with *L'Intention poétique* (1969), where Glissant collected his literary criticism to sketch out the literary tradition he considered himself to belong to, a literary tradition that was above all marked by the relational consciousness he associated with the works of painters and writers like Roberto Matta (Chile), William Faulkner (US), and Paul Nizer (Guadeloupe). While the poetic strand of relation mapped in *L'Intention poétique*, for the most part linked France with the Caribbean, the relation the *Anthologie* traces links to *all of humanity* by loosely juxtaposing excerpts of poems, song lyrics, essays and novels of more than 300 authors, beginning with the US-American singer and poet Abel Meeropol's (1903-1986) *Strange fruit*, and ending with the Jamaican dub-beat poet Michael Smith's (1954-1983) *Me Cyan Believe It*. In between, the *Anthologie* includes short excerpts of poetry, that appear to be placed next to one another without any chronological or geographical coherence. The dates and countries indicate, which I have added to the first dozen of authors in the *Anthologie*, depict its global ambition: Meeropol [USA, 1903-1986], François Villon [France, 1431-1463], Dante [Italy, 1265-1321], Gilles Deleuze [France, 1925-1995], Diogenes [Greece, 404-323 BC], Edda [Iceland, 13th century], Hölderlin [Germany, 1770-1843], Li Bai [China, 701-762], John Milton [England, 1608-1674], Rimbaud [France, 1842-1902], René Menil [Martinique, 1907-2004], William Blake [England 1757-1827], Hegel [Germany, 1770-1831], Mvom Eko [Gabon, ?], Sigmund Freud [Austria, 1856-1939], Pablo Neruda [Chile, 1904-1973], a Bambara epic, and poems and songs by North American Indigenous nations. Placed next to literary texts are quotes taken from political speeches, such as Mandela's inauguration speech as newly elected president of South Africa (ATM 45) or Mohammed Ali's famous statement, “I ain't got nothing Against them

³⁹⁸“The reach of the poem is not eternal, it immediately meets other poems of the world, in a place that is both visible and secret that every poem allows one to feel”, my translation.

Viet Cong“ (ATM 182).

What connects these poets? What do they have in common? What defines their community? The selection of writers, singers and poets Glissant featured in his *Anthologie* serve as a fitting sample of poets whose *langage* Glissant considered as an expression of the chaos of the Tout-Monde which in Glissant's 'non-paradoxical paradox' is described as, “*total dans la mesure où nous le rêvons tous ainsi, et sa différence d'avec la totalité reste que son tout est un devenir*”³⁹⁹ (ATM 19). While the list of writers Glissant discussed in in *L'Intention poétique*, more than half a century earlier, still operated with the chronology of Eurocentric modernity towards an acknowledgement of the diversity of the (whole) world, the *Anthologie* no longer relies on chronologies, nor on geographic divisions. On a formal level the chaos of the Tout-Monde is represented in the seemingly random arrangement and fragmented fashion of the poems, that are edited into small bits, and juxtaposed to one another in short, sometimes single-lined, quotations.

If the *Anthologie* represents a different kind of epic in the form of a (necessarily incomplete) catalogue of world literature, this can directly link back to my interest in how Glissant's used the founding epic, or founding myth as discursive basis for imagined communities, as outlined at the beginning of chapter 2. The afterword of the *Anthologie* supports such a reading in that it takes the form of a poem written from a poem's perspective, in the first person singular. It covers a whole page and perhaps insinuating the endlessness of 'the poem' it reaches its first full stop on the following page (ATM 317-18), and then turns to an explanation of how the literature of the Tout-Monde, which Glissant conceptualised in the *Anthologie* differs from prevalent conceptions world literature debated in the field of literary studies:

*“Aucune poétique n'est 'universelle' pour nous. L'idée du monde n'y suffit pas. Une littérature de l'idée du monde peut être habile, ingénieuse, donner l'impression qu'elle a 'vu' la totalité, (c'est par exemple ce qu'on appelle en anglais une World Literature, une Littérature monde en français), si elle n'est que d'idée elle vaticinera dans des non-lieux et ne sera que subtile déstructure et hâtive recomposition. Les poétiques fuient l'impeccable perfection de leur propos même, se donnent au tremblement. Les anciens poèmes, les poèmes incertains d'alentour, l'inspiration des amis, le cri au lion. L'idée du monde n'est vivante que de s'autoriser des imaginaires du monde, où s'annonce que mon lieu inlassablement conjoint à d'autre, et en quoi sans bouger il s'aventure, et comment il m'emporte dans ce mouvement immobile”*⁴⁰⁰ (ATM 317-18),

In a similar fashion to the way in which he had previously distanced himself from attempts

399“total to the extent that we dream it, and its difference to totality is that it's total nature is in a state of becoming“, my translation.

400“There is no universal poetics for us. The idea of the world is not enough. A literature devoted to the idea of the world can be clever, ingenious, it can give the impression that it has 'seen' the totality, (this is for example what is called World Literature in English or *Littérature monde* in French), if it is only of idea it will only pronounce non-places and will be little more than a subtle anti-structure or a hasty recomposition. Poetics flees the impeccable perfection of their propositions, instead giving themselves up to trembling. The ancient poems, the poems that are uncertain of their surroundings, inspired by friends, by the cry of the lion. The idea of the world is only alive when it allows itself to imagine the world, where it announces that my place is tirelessly conjoined with another, and where it carries me in this motionless motion without moving”, my translation.

of being identified as part of the traditions of the revolutionary *écrivain engagés*, Marxism, Négritude and postcolonialism, among others (see 1.3.), Glissant in this passage clearly distances himself from the world literature label, although his work has already been included in this canon as much as it has been used to formulate a critique against it.⁴⁰¹

Glissant's Littérature du Tout-Monde as 'World Literature' of Another Kind

The turn of the 21st century coincided with a rising interest in the notion of world literature that many scholars perceived to take over from postcolonial theory (Robbins 2012, 383). Beginning with a critique of Gayatri Spivak in *Death of a Discipline* (2003), where she lamented that world literature was increasingly used to replace comparative literature, a trend she considered to be problematic in that world literature tends to homogenise literary diversity by 'appropriating and domesticating difference' – in contrast to comparative literature's attention to the specificities of language and idiom – an influential debate has ensued around the meanings and implications of the term that mainly took place in Anglophone literary studies departments (Alon 2016). Whereas, from a postcolonial perspective, the effort to extend the literary canon beyond the confines of national or Western literatures are a welcome development, it has – from the same perspective – received criticism pertaining to the alleged depoliticisation of the terms of engagement from postcolonial to world literature. While postcolonialism is clearly associated with a stance against the political project of (neo)colonialism, the geographically more exhaustive notion of world-literature does not carry any overt political connotation (Robbins 2012, 384). Whether world literature, could, against this charge, still be considered to carry important political implications is the charge to which several world literature scholars have responded. In the following I will outline the most prominent positions in this field to, in turn, place Glissant's conception of a *littérature du Tout-Monde* in relation to this discussion with particular attention being paid to its political implications.

According to Eric Hayot, the main conceptual division among the key theorists of world literature can be identified with regards to a *systematic* understanding of the term 'world', as taken from Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system-theory, or a more comprehensive or *global* understanding of the term. The works of Franco Moretti and Pascale Casanova are usually associated with the former position. Analogous to the critique of the global capitalist system by Wallerstein, their work on world literature is mainly interested in the power dynamic influencing the circulation or non-circulation of particular works of literature on the global literary market. The focus thus falls on the “contests and dominations that organize relations between centers and peripheries” (Hayot 2011, 131). In *Conjectures on World Literature* (2000) Moretti writes in that

⁴⁰¹For a case of the former see for instance Tracy Chevalier's volume *Contemporary World Writers* (1993, 198-199); for the latter see particularly Emily Apter's *Against World Literature* where she argues directly, among others, referencing Glissant that “efforts to revive World Literature rely on a translatability assumption. As a result, incommensurability and what has been called the Untranslatable are insufficiently built into the literary heuristic” (2013, 3).

vein:

“I will borrow this initial hypothesis from the world-system school of economic history, for which international capitalism is a system that is simultaneously one, and unequal: with a core, and a periphery (and a semiperiphery) that are bound together in a relationship of growing inequality. One, and unequal: one literature (Weltliteratur, singular, as in Goethe and Marx), or perhaps, better, one world literary system (of inter-related literatures); but a system which is different from what Goethe and Marx had hoped for, because it's profoundly unequal” (55-56).

Casanova, who is also primarily interested in the hierarchies and violent modes of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' into the canon of world literature, writes in *The World Republic of Letters* (2004) that “Finally, with decolonization, countries in Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and Asia demanded access to literary legitimacy and existence as well. This world republic of letters has its own mode of operation: its own economy, which produces hierarchies and various forms of violence; and above all, its own history” (11). By equating literary texts to national actors in an international global political community in his proposition of a 'world republic of letters' Casanova points out how particular works of literature are systematically granted the status of universality while others are relegated to a peripheral or local status by the 'machine' of literary criticism:

“Only the [...] appreciation of the historical link established since the sixteenth century between literature and the nation, can give the literary projects of writers on the periphery their justification and their aesthetic and political coherence. By drawing a map of the literary world and highlighting the gap between great and small literary nations, one may hope to be delivered at last from the prejudices inculcated by literary critics at the center” (354).

While the critical approach of Casanova and Moretti is particularly geared towards rendering the nationalist and capitalist logic that dictates whose writing is being excluded from university curricula visible, an alternative conception of world literature is less overtly critical in its approach and, instead, claims to be more expansive and *as non-Eurocentric as possible*, with the aim of enhancing “mutual understanding and tolerance between nations, through the revelation of universal humanity across particular differences even as such differences are valued” (Goethe quoted by Cheah 2008, 28). This line of thought is primarily associated with the work of David Damrosch. In his book *What is World Literature* (2003), Damrosch defined his understanding of the term in the following manner: “world literature is not an infinite, ungraspable canon of works but rather a mode of circulation and of reading, a mode that is as applicable to individual works as to bodies of material, available for reading established classics and new discoveries alike” (5). Characteristic for the entry of a work of literature into the community of world literature is a double process: “first by being read as literature, second, by circulating out into a broader world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin”(6). Over time, he adds, a work can thus move in and out of the canon of world literature or what Damrosch refers to as the 'limited company of perennial

World Masterpieces', "if it shifts beyond a threshold point along either axis, the literary or the worldly" (6).

From what I have discussed throughout this sub-section, it has become clear that with his suggestion of a *Littérature du Tout-Monde* Glissant's was neither primarily interested in the study of the 'circulation of works in beyond their country of origin' and how they gain the critical status of Masterpieces (Damrosch), nor a critique of the political and economic powers structuring the centre-periphery dynamic behind a canon of world literature (Casanova) and the discrepancy between local and global 'circuits of value' (Garuba and Benghe 2017). There is, nevertheless, something about this scholarly debate that concerns Glissant's work at a fundamental level. Pheng Cheah has formulated this aspect succinctly without directly referencing Glissant, when he writes that "since one cannot see the universe, the world, or humanity, the cosmopolitan optic is not one of perceptual experience but of the imagination. World literature is an important aspect of cosmopolitanism because it is a type of world-making activity that enables us to imagine a world" (2008, 26). Mary Gallagher has made a similar point when she argued that Glissant's work might have to be considered 'world writing' instead of world literature (2008, 4-6). While world literature for Gallagher is mainly a marketing strategy for a western audience, analogous to 'world music', world writing, refers for Gallagher to notions of interconnectedness, intersections between styles, worlds, traditions and cultures that evoke a certain sense of worldliness (44). Literature, here, becomes a means to gaining a sense of the world as a whole resembling Glissant's own approach. For Cheah, this sensitivity for the world can also be found in Goethe's formulations pertaining to an 'invisible' and 'higher intellectual community that open up a new universal horizon" that Goethe referred to as a "quiet, almost secret, Church, since it would be futile to set themselves against the current of the day; rather must they manfully strive to maintain their position till the flood has passed" (quoted in Cheah 2008, 29). As for Glissant, the world is more akin to a vision than a geography. Instead of reflecting the power structures of the neoliberal globalisation, as Moretti and Casanova imply, Cheah thus argues that the cosmopolitan vocation of world literature resists being limited to a vision of this unified geographical entity. In other words, world literature is cast as intrinsically resisting globalisation, in a similar manner to how Glissant's cast the poet's defence of mundiality.

Wai Chee Dimock (2003) has articulated this mode of resistance in the framework of her call for adopting 'planetary time' as the only appropriate context for the study of literary works, a notion that has become an important point of reference in this thesis. As much as Glissant's notion of a 'world poem' whose beginnings can be traced back to the earliest rock paintings in *Une nouvelle région du monde* (2006) is in expression of literature's role in planetary time, so is his

conception of the politics of literature in agreement with Dimock's argument that literature needs to be seen as a political actor in the *longue durée*. In contrast to an exclusive bias on 'fast moving' actors of globalisation (transnational corporations, nation-states, NGOs etc.), she views the work of literature as an entity that is “much longer in their making and much longer in their unfolding. Clocked by something other than a national chronology—or any kind of standard timetable—these bearers of planetary time are, for the most part, slow players, their action uncertain, often not legible at all, perhaps never legible, except as a halting script” (2003, 491-92). In other words, the politics of literature might not be immediately visible, like the Batouto, it nevertheless plays an influential role that resists the fast pace of neoliberal globalisation by “restoring to us the roots and declensions of ancient words, enables us to see literature as the unfinished home of planetary time, the unfinished home of the living and the dead” (507).

If Glissant can be considered as working, to a significant extent, in 'planetary time' and the belief in the inherent resistance of poets against the neoliberal project of homogenising the world, how can his method of selecting works of literature as belonging to the *Littérature du Tout-Monde* mostly aptly be described? As a potential overlap with Damrosch's proposal of viewing world literature as a method, a mode of reading rather than a set list of texts, one could refer to his view of an elliptical approach: “that is generated from two foci at once. We never truly cease to be ourselves as we read, and our present concerns and modes of reading will always provide one focus of our understanding, but the literature of other times and eras present us with another focus as well, and we read in the field of force generated between these two foci” (2003, 133). Set against Glissant's personal list of world literature, Damrosch's argument, emphasises the highly personal aspect of a specific cosmopolitan project. Glissant's method of identifying 'world literature' can also be said to be elliptical in the sense that he judged the writing of others based on their ability to relate or to 'rhizome' their specific places with a creolising world at large: “*Le poète tache à enrhisomer son lieu dans la totalité, à diffuser la totalité dans son lieu: la permanence dans l'instant et inversement, l'ailleurs dans l'ici et réciproquement*”⁴⁰² (TTM 123) Rather than being invested in a project of expanding a national literatures to include those who speak or write the same language – as one could also elaborate with regards to Glissant's response to Le Bris project of a 'world literature in French' –,⁴⁰³ or discussing the authority of an 'external agent' (the publishing industry,

402 “The poet undertakes to rhizome his place in the totality, to diffuse the totality in his place: permanence in the instance and the other way round, reciprocally the 'there' in the 'here'”, my translation.

403 Outside the *Anthologie*, Glissant's ambivalent position to the project of a French World Literature, as advocated by Michel Le Bris et al. in a volume called *Pour une littérature-monde* (2007), has been pointed out by Charles Forsdick (2010). Glissant's participation in the project which has been regarded by some as progressive in that it questions the differentiation between 'French' and non-metropolitan 'francophone' literatures, but has also received harsh criticism for its reproduction of a Eurocentric notion of linguistic exclusivity and the belief that literature has to 'pass through Paris' to be considered 'worldly'. As Forsdick points out, the form of Glissant's contribution signals his ambivalent association with Le Bris' manifesto. Instead of directly engaging with the notion of a world literature in French proposed by Le Bris, as other contributors in the volume (2010:127), Glissant submitted a dated interview with Philippe Artières entitled *Solidaire et Solitaire* in which Glissant provides his own

the academy etc.) deciding whether a work of literature is granted the status of 'world literature' or not, for Glissant it was – in the first instance – a choice a writer had to make. Glissant phrase this choice in the description of his own literary practice as 'writing in the presence of all the languages of the world'. With this phrase Glissant evidently did not uphold the view that an author has to be multilingual. The official *language* of an author was, for him, not as important as the *langage* she or he developed, meaning a distinct personal style of writing, a *singular* way of expressing a relational consciousness of the world, which – in the same instance – would express the collective imaginary giving rise to this vision.

In a similar manner to the epic of the Batouto narrated in *Sartorius* and *Ormerod*, the collection of poetry contained in the *Anthologie* can be interpreted as providing a discursive foundation for new world-communities to be created, the new epic of the Tout-Monde (2.0.). The authors Glissant selected, again, do not form a community in a traditional sense of the term. The only aspect they have in common is that Glissant considered their work to form common-places in the Tout-Monde. In that sense, Glissant's world-community of poets appears more like an open-ended network of cross-references than a hierarchical body or a closed circle. As the introduction to the *Anthologie* pointed out, this community of poets is, again, not only defined by similarities, but also against the 'enemies of the living', the ones who live the 'world as solitude' and “*craignent surtout non pas la totalité mais la diversité, non pas l'alterité mais l'étrange et exigeante mixité*”⁴⁰⁴ (ATM 14). This opposition, which already appeared in *L'Intention poétique* as the contrast between those who are 'immune to the world', or who live the 'world-as-solitude', and those who 'perceive and live it as relation' or live the world-as-relation (IP 19, 21), is remarkable in that it draws a clear dissociative line in a general political practice that I have, so far, mainly described as associative and reconciliatory – an issue I will take up in 6.3.

To conclude this sub-section, Glissant's conception of world literature differs from established debates in literary studies once it is read through the lens of *community creations* instead of an assembly of texts. Instead of being concerned with the pedagogic impacts of being exposed to literature from other cultures, or with questions of inclusion and exclusion – although these aspects undoubtedly play important roles in his work –, Glissant's main interest in establishing a personal list of world-literature was to bring a new world community into being, the “unfinished home of the living and the dead” to which Dimock refers as, and which I have described as the fictional and non-fictional Batouto people. This aspect also points to the immediate political implications of world literature for Glissant. In addition to the belief that a secret world community of poets intervenes in the global power structures in subtle and invisible ways, the decision to

definition of world literature and its intricate connection with politics of relation (see 1.4.1.).

⁴⁰⁴“fear not totality but diversity, not alterity but the strange and demanding *mixité*“, my translation.

identify with or belong to this culturally highly diverse community that shares a view of the world as Tout-Monde, is highly significant for Glissant's brand of cosmopolitanism. The political practice of this imaginary community consists of works of resistance and creation whose impact cannot be measured in years or decades, but more appropriately in the context Dimock refers to as planetary time. Although this world-community appears to be confined to the realm of Glissant's own imagination and the textual level of his books, the following section will elaborate the concrete institutional forms which Glissant's engagement for these kinds of world-communities took.

Section Summary

This section traced how Glissant extended his work on community creation from the Caribbean archipelago towards the imagination of a world community that bridges the division between fiction and non-fiction. The epic story of the Batouto people moved the point of origin of a fictional world-community to Africa, and from there traced its spread across the globe (4.3.1.). The Batouto 'world community' is a non-conventional community in the sense that their members are both fictional and non-fictional, dead and alive, and once again directly invite or include the reader to establish an extra-textual relation. In the course of their history, as depicted in *Sartorius*, the Batouto people perform a transition from a traditional community bound by a shared location, religious belief and biological filiation towards a 'postmodern' community spread across the globe that is bound by spiritual kinship whose genealogy has become impossible to trace. Whereas the ancient Batouto people are bound to the fictional realm, *Sartorius* contains ongoing speculations, on the part of narrators and characters, as to whether specific non-fictional personalities could not also count as belonging to the Batouto through specific qualities they embodied. On the level of content and form, these speculations, once again, mark an area in Glissant's fictional work that deliberately seeks to cross the division between fiction and non-fiction, between what is real and what is imagined (4.3.2.). In a more direct fashion than the communities presented in the previous section (the historic maroon communities in *Le quatrième siècle* and *Ormerod*), Glissant's invention of the story of origin of the Batouto takes the shape of a founding myth for a community, as outlined at the beginning of chapter 2, and thus puts in practice the view held by Rancière (1.2.2.) and Deleuze at the beginning of this chapter, that the task of literature is to invent a 'new people that is missing'.

Being or becoming a Batouto in and through an engagement with Glissant's fiction, is as much a process of finding one's own identity – when some of the characters have a vague feeling of belonging elsewhere –, as much as it is one of detecting it in others (as in Glissant's own writing practice), and (on the part of the reader) of actively identifying oneself with the Batouto. Again, as I outlined in the previous section with regards to Glissant's stylistic marronage, the option of joining the Batouto nation is not a straight forward invitation or imposition for the reader of Glissant's

work. It requires a slow process of reading and an awareness for the subtle relations of *signalétiques*. As the question of whether there might be such a thing as an 'anti-batouto group' towards the end of *Ormerod* indicates, the Batouto community is not immune to threats from the outside. Although this question is only of peripheral importance in Glissant's fiction, it points to an antagonistic dimension informing the creation of Glissantian world-communities, which I have already alluded to in the introduction to this chapter and Glissant's insistence that communities are physically "threatened in their very existence, even beyond what is comfortable for us to consider". In that sense, the Batouto community struggles as much for the right to survive as it tries to promote its vision of the world through works of art as it struggles (consciously or unconsciously) against the forces of Empire by insisting on the need to preserve the differences of the cultures of the world.

In terms of Glissant's practice of marronage, the depiction of the Batouto can be considered as a flight into the past, as much as it is an imagined flight back to Africa and into the world (chapter 2 and 3). This move to Africa is a significant in so far as it is a philosophical move towards a mythical point of origin of a relational ontology that, for Glissant, served as the cultural foundation for a world-community that is in direct opposition to a brand of major cosmopolitanism that traces its foundations to a mythical Greek rationalism (5.4.). With the fictional migration of the Batouto, out of Africa and into the world, this worldview is depicted as spreading and as encountering similar world-views among Indigenous communities and communities of poets and artists elsewhere. The mode of relation or kinship among the Batouto in the contemporary moment is not one tied to the traditional communities of *blood, soil or friendship* (4.1.1.), but a spiritual kinship, for which the shared sign of the 'o' in the Batouto names functions as a symbol.

The fourth sub-section (4.3.4.) demonstrated how the transition Glissant performed in his fictional work can also be detected in his critical engagement with literature. Reading his books *L'Intention poétique* and the *Anthologie du Tout-Monde* through the lens of community creation, and in conversation with ongoing debates around the notion of world-literature, made it possible to delineate the literary canon Glissant constructed around the notion of a literature of the Tout-Monde in the form of an imagined global community of poets to which he considered to belong. Instead of positing this global community of poets as constituting a universally applicable canon of world literature to be studied in university departments, Glissant presented this community as a novel way of reading world literature by measuring the works of individual authors or collective communities according to the (singularly imposed) standard of the worldliness of their imaginary. In other words, instead of proposing an *objective* measurement of world literature, either according to the circulation of specific works of literature through translation (Damrosch/Garuba), or through a critical analysis of which works are being included or excluded from university curricula according

to a colonial logic of literary centres and peripheries (Moretti/Casanova), Glissant proposed a *highly subjective* list of writers who he identified, from his own location, as having been marked by an imaginary of relation. Although this founding act or attribution of worldliness to a list of writers by a single person might be deemed problematic according to Glissant's own standards – if one recalls, for example, his repeated insistence “As for my identity, I will take care of that myself“, from *L'Intention poétique* onwards –, the non-exclusive and non-authoritarian nature of the list proposes that *everyone can create their own list of world-literature* as much as anyone can create their own imaginary Batouto community to which they choose to belong. The founding moment of this world-community could thus be perceived as an *opening towards more world-communities*, rather than a *closure towards the promotion of a singular mode of cosmopolitanism*.

Instead of being constituted as an alternative to the nation-state, this community exists both above and below the official and visible political realm. Its invisibility needs to be seen both *natural*, because the subject matter of its work is the imaginary and its political agency is influential in the *longue durée* as much as it is a *necessary mode of protection* against the potential threat posed by what Rancière refers to as the police (1.2.2.). It is moreover a *political strategy* that allows for an intervention into the operations of the political system on a discursive level. On the level of the individual and the collective, this vocation or ability to 'read the signs', is translated into an ability to see the invisible and to entertain a non-violent relationship with ones surroundings, human and non-human. With Rancière, one can associate the ability of 'seeing the invisible', or 'hearing the voiceless', as a practice of particular political importance. If a 'truly political' moment only arises when those who are rendered invisible by the dominant political system become visible, or make the claim that their speech should be considered as reasonable as those of established communities, then the Batouto are, in a sense, *the political community per se*.

In terms of the theoretical dimension of communities introduced at the onset of this chapter, I noted that, instead of opting for a singularly valid model of community, Glissant's world-community of poets takes on various forms. This aspect was made particularly evident by the way his work of fiction alluded to a community of poets linked to one another on a spiritual level, as well as to traditional communities bound by a shared location or beliefs, like Indigenous communities, to whom Glissant generally attributed a privileged access to a relational imaginary. Instead of choosing one form over the other, Glissant insinuated repeatedly, that these different world-communities have to be seen as being in relation with one another. Whereas a strong thrust of Glissant's work of fiction and his abstract deliberations on communities points to an elusive or impossible community connected through spiritual kinship alone, these allusions to concrete more concrete and institutionalised forms of community underline that Glissant's politics of relation is not

at all averse to what Nancy dismissively refers to as creating communities through *work*. Although the discussion of this section was a long way away from the nationalist struggles for Martinican autonomy of the 1960s (4.1.2.), it has left an opening to connect these abstract fictional and theoretical ideas with more concrete institutional practices. The following section will pursue this line of inquiry further.

4.4. 'Poetics in International Organisations!' – Creating World-Communities of Readers and Writers

“Moreover, any global analysis of the situation – what UNESCO for a while summed up under the awkward title of 'worldwide problematics' – was immediately pilloried by these representatives and declared useless or dangerous. Time and money wasted. It would, however, have been a major accomplishment on the part of an institution of that nature to have woven the beginnings of this global Relation. [...] Poetics, in an international Organization!”
– Édouard Glissant, *Poétique de la relation* (PR 219)

This section is concerned with the ways in which Glissant connected his conceptual and fictional work on community creations, as described in 4.2. and 4.3., with concrete extra-textual initiatives to create communities that would institutionalise his imagination of a world community. The structure of this section is broadly modelled on two different, yet overlapping, types of world-communities I consider Glissant to have been invested in creating: world-communities of *readers* and world-communities *writers*. I will begin this work by interrogating a Glissantian world-community of readers, more specifically the readers of the *UNESCO Courier*, a cultural journal he edited from 1982 to 1988 in the first sub-section (4.4.1.). The second sub-section presents a community of writers that organised themselves under the institutional umbrella of the *International Parliament of Writers* (IPW) (4.4.2.).

Although, in my view, an interrogation of Glissant's editorial work and his engagement for IPW are two particularly illustrative examples of Glissant's organisational work on communities, for his politics of relation more generally, the focus on these two case studies should, not be mistaken as the only ones worthy to be examined in this context. In 3.3. I have already mentioned that his work on the establishment of the *Institut martiniquais d'études* (IME) and the *Institut du Tout-Monde* (ITM) was also marked by a strong community building character. In 3.3.2. I have in this regard pointed out the collective work Glissant pursued at the IME during the 1970s (Noudelmann 2018, 223). The IME could be cast as a concrete face-to-face community of necessity, due to its role in the overall educational structure of Martinique, as much as it turned into a spiritual community of like-minded people in the account of its former students, like Juliette Éloi-Blézès. In a similar way, the ITM provides an institutional frame for a community of friends and an intellectual fraternity in the view of those frequenting its events, like Aliocha Lasowski (see 3.3.3.). According to Noudelmann, its former director, the community created by the ITM has a small, ephemeral and archipelagic structure: “*une petite communauté à la fois éphémère et fidèle qui s'agrège et se désagrège selon les voyages, les exils, les allées et venues de celles et ceux qui,*

consciemment ou non, déploient cet archipel souhaité par Édouard”⁴⁰⁵ (2018, 275). Whereas the community in and around the IME was in part shaped by the pedagogic framework in which it operated, the ITM exists both as a concrete, yet mobile, physical space where events are organised, but also as a virtual space through its online presence: a website and social media pages like Facebook or Instagram. Since a website is accessible across large parts of the world, it offers the basis for new forms of communities that have become normalised in the digital age, as communities that are no longer tied to a particular place but to a shared imaginary of the world. The several thousand people who 'like' the ITM on Facebook can, for instance, be considered as forming a 'small country' that exists, but remains invisible outside its digital representation. The IME and especially the ITM thus warrant to be studied more closely by Glissant scholars, specifically with regards to how new information technology supports the set-up of Glissantian communities. Since the advent of these forms of media do, however, largely fall outside the scope of Glissant's own considerations, the two ensuing sub-sections will be dedicated to more 'traditional' means of community creation, firstly in the form of a cultural journal (4.4.1.) and secondly (4.4.2.) an association of writers.

4.4.1. Creating a World-Community of Readers – Glissant's Editorial Work at the UNESCO Courier (1982-1988)

In this sub-section, I interrogate the question in how far Glissant's editorial work for the *UNESCO Courier* (henceforth *Courier*)– whose slogan reads *A window on the world* – can be considered as constituting an expansion of the community building aspect of Glissant's work that I have discussed throughout this chapter. By pursuing this line of inquiry, I am making the case for a reconsideration of his editorial work as a fitting illustration of his politics of relation in general.

Thus far, Glissant's editorial work has not been studied in this light, nor on its own right. Among Glissant scholars, it has predominantly been considered a side-project financing his literary career, or as a professional experience that, in part, informed the conceptual work Glissant published in *Poétique de la Relation* (1990). When it is considered as part of his 'activism' work in the secondary literature (1.3.3.), Glissant's engagements with the *Courier* is only mentioned in passing. Lasowski notes for instance that during his tenure as editor-in-chief, Glissant turned the *Courier* into “*un forum ouvert aux débats intellectuels à l'échelle internationale*”⁴⁰⁶ (2015, 124). Expanding the scholarly engagement with Glissant's oeuvre to comprise the *Courier* issues from 1982 to 1988 is promising for a number of reasons. Firstly, because more so than the format of the monograph it reflects a collective way of working. To reiterate, as I pointed out with Michael J.

⁴⁰⁵“a small community, both ephemeral and loyal, a community that assembles and disperses according to travels, exiles, and he comings and goings of those who consciously or unconsciously make up the archipelago Edouard dreamed of”, my translation.

⁴⁰⁶“an open intellectual forum with an international dimension“, my translation.

Dash earlier, Glissant considered the collective to be the main generative system for poetic work (1995, 4). Contrasting the image of the solitary author, “to assert such a collectivity is an act of defiance, with clear political implications“ (4). The collective nature of the editorial work on the *Courier* can, for example, be detected in cases when it is not made evident who wrote some of the texts or image captions, whereas other articles are signed by Glissant and were at times republished in other journals or his own books. A second element I find particularly interesting about the *Courier* as part of Glissant's political archive is the journalistic style of writing that is clearly geared towards a general audience and thus differs from what I have discussed as his stylistic marronage above (4.2.2.). In that regard one could also mention the overall aesthetic format of the *Courier*, where large-sized images taking up most of the pages. An in-depth engagement with Glissant's editorial work on this journal, which unfortunately falls outside the scope of this thesis, would therefore have to engage as much with the selection of writers, themes and contents of certain issues, and the juxtaposition of images to detect the overall editorial policy which Glissant pursued at the *Courier*. In lieu of a close reading of individual issues of the *Courier*, I will in the following sketch out its broad contours and the ways in which it can be read as a community-building project on Glissant's part. This kind of interpretation is, again, for the most part, an attribution on my part, and one that Glissant himself has not suggested in a prominent fashion. As the following preliminary notes on Glissant's abstract thought on the political importance of journals or periodicals, however, indicates the general thrust of his philosophy can nevertheless be seen as supportive of the kind of engagement with his editorial work espoused in this sub-section.

Relators Par Excellence – On the Political Importance of Cultural Journals

Speaking on the occasion of the 21st *European Meeting of Cultural Journals* in 2008, Glissant insisted on the important role cultural journals can play in the political realm. In what might appear a surprising exaggeration of the political impact of cultural journals, Glissant argued, “there is a spiritual revolution to defend in the world against the identity of single roots. What actors are more destined to engage in this revolution than journals?” In line with his general association of creative work as a collective process, to which I have already alluded in the context of the IME and *Le discours antillais*, this statement forcefully proposes to view journals and periodicals as political actors.⁴⁰⁷ Referring indirectly back to his definition of relation, he continued, “They create links, relay and relate the state of the world, both in its particulars and in quantity“.⁴⁰⁸ In other words, cultural journals were for Glissant 'political relators' par excellence. Discursively associating their political impact with the level of policy, he asserted:

“Generally speaking, there are journals in Europe or about Europe but are there any European journals?”

⁴⁰⁷This case has also been made by Brent Hayes Edwards (2003).

⁴⁰⁸References to this speech refer to the English online version <https://www.eurozine.com/cultural-journals-and-europe/>.

What I mean is do these journals allow us to perceive what Europe has in common, through its conception of what Europe is not, that is to say through the rest of the world? Europe, at least its institutions; has a domestic policy, a more or less concerted policy of actions regarding topical issues, but do those people who constitute it think about or even feel what the is world and how to deal with it?“

As he insinuated, it is the task of cultural journals to unify a diverse population by pointing out what they have in common. This commonality can also be phrased with Benedict Anderson (2006), on whose work I will elaborate a little further on, as the kind of imagined community that serves as the necessary foundation for the functioning of nation-states and supranational bodies like the EU. The potential power of cultural journals to operate as community foundations was further emphasised by Glissant in the same speech by an analogy between cultural journals and languages. Modifying his often used phrase 'We are not going to *save one language* or another here or there, while *letting others perish*' to, “you won't save one journal by letting others perish“, Glissant implicitly equated the readership of a journal with a nation speaking the same language. He thereby also pointed out that the value of an individual journal, like a language, is not quantifiable but is a total value for the world's diversity. While some journals have a larger following and others a smaller one, their non-alignment with established political actors, is what makes them an essential asset to an individual culture as much as to the totality of cultures making up the whole-world. The contrast between cultural journals and mass media, to which Glissant dismissively referred as *agents d'éclat* (clash agents) in *Poétique de la Relation*, whose characteristic 'violence' is an expression of an “unconscious and desperate rage of not 'grasping' the chaos of the world“ (PR 141), lies in the former's ability to relate to the world without trying to dominate it, or by acting in the name of a political or economic hegemon, or even a pre-existing community. Whereas the newspaper and the novel have been closely associated to the historical formation and contemporary functioning of imagined communities of the nation-state, according to Anderson, the community to which a cultural journal refers is less easy to define.

The specific sense in which Glissant considered journals to exercise their political role, can be exemplified by his work for the *Courier*, which Glissant mentioned in the same speech while pointing out that, in several countries, the journal was at the time among the only ones being able to pass censorship or that it was the only one being published in the language of that country.⁴⁰⁹ As I will claim in the following, the importance Glissant accords to cultural journals was however less linked to a struggle for human rights, such as the fight for 'freedom of expression' or the 'right to information'. For Glissant, the relevance of cultural journals was mainly due to their ability to

⁴⁰⁹Other sources confirm that the *Courier* was one of the “rare periodicals authorized to cross the Iron Curtain“, and that the *Courier* was, the “sole reading material and contact with the outside world“ for several political prisoners. Nelson Mandela during his incarceration by the Apartheid regime was among them. “These bridges across borders were highly appreciated by the individuals who benefited, while for the dominating powers it was a less dangerous way of staying 'politically correct' at least in the short run“ (Defourny quoted in Krishnamurthy Sriramesh, Dejan Verčić 2003, 429).

provide a space for a community express its way of seeing the world to meet other communities on the imaginary level of the Tout-Monde.

Running the Courier

Glissant's engagement as editor-in-chief of the UNESCO's monthly cultural journal *Courier* was closely entangled with Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, who was a close friend of Glissant since their mutual time at the *Société Africaine de Culture* in the 1950s. M'Bow, who was re-elected as director of UNESCO in 1982 was dismissed in 1988 due to his uncompromising stance towards the interests of some of the most powerful nation-states under the umbrella of UNESCO, particularly the US and the UK. In his capacity as editor-in-chief, Glissant published up to 70 issues of the *Courier*. Claiming to represent 158 nation-states, the *Courier* was published in 25 languages when Glissant took over the role as editor. In 1988 the number increased to 35, including three issues per year in Braille published in English, French and Spanish. Among the rough indicators for its total print-run are estimates of 1.500.000 in 1960 (Duedahl 2016, 28), or 160.000 copies per month from 2001 to 2003 (Sriramesh and Verčič 2003, 433). In light of Glissant's call for cultural journals to provide a platform for a particular community to establish a 'way of thinking and feeling the world', the main questions one could pose as part of an analysis of the *Courier* issues from 1982 to 1988 would be: What kind of conception of the world did the *Courier* put forward? And what kind of community was constituted by it? In the following, I will address these two questions separately.

A preliminary note with regards to the former question concerning the world-view presented by the *Courier*, has to bear in mind that, whereas some of the *Courier* issues appear to be deeply marked by Glissant's philosophy it is difficult to discern Glissant's impact in others. In contrast to titles that evidently take up some of Glissant's most cherished themes, such as *Caraïbes aux Vois multiples* (1981), *War on War – The Poet's Cry* (1982) *Langues et Langages* (1983), *The Spoken and the Written Word* (August 1985), *Small Countries, A Wealth of Cultures* (October 1986) (see illustration 6) or *The Baroque* (1987), a predominance of themes that are not at all related to Glissant's own preoccupation but more generically part of the UNESCO agenda (e.g. World War memorialisations, global poverty, access to clean water etc.), provokes the question as to how involved Glissant was and how the distribution of responsibilities between the UNESCO leadership and the *Courier's* Editor-in-Chief, as well as among the different language editors, was organised – an aspect which would require further research. What can, however, be quite clearly discerned is that following Glissant's entry into the UNESCO secretariat in the early 1980's, several issues of the *Courier* were published with a specific focus on the Caribbean, as a region whose cultural and political history UNESCO deemed important. Glissant's signature can clearly be seen in these issues. The liberty Glissant had in designing the *Courier* is also made apparent in singular issues

like *War on War* (1982), in which journal's editorial announces that the

“UNESCO headquarters will become for a day an international forum from which a score of poets from every corner of the globe will speak out through their poems against the never resting forces of oppression and destruction, a platform from which the mingled voices of peace, poetry and liberty can declare 'War on War'” (3).

For this particular issue, Glissant invited a group of friends to contribute, such as the painter Roberto Matta, who composed the cover of the issue, Allen Ginsberg, Jayne Cortez and Sony Labou Tansi among others. In the same issue, Glissant's friend and fellow poet Jean-Jacques Lebel wrote, in Glissantian style,

“[W]e have accepted the challenge implicit in the incursion of poetry into an official institution. If poetry is still there it is because the other forms of expression (scientific, political, religious, and administrative) and the other systems of belief, perception and expression, have proved incapable of comprehending the present world crisis” (4).

Lebel here seems to reiterate a set of concerns that also shape Glissant's understanding of poetry and politics. Instead of the neat geographic divisions of the Global North and the Global South, the 'West and the Rest', the political importance of poetry evoked here does not adhere to set conceptions of the nation-state. The main impression emerging from paging through the issues of the *Courier* is what Glissant referred to as 'culture as totality', and thus a conception of culture that is disconnected from the construct of nation-states to which they are conventionally considered to belong. As M'Bow's book *Where the Future Begins* (1982), points out, he shared several of Glissant's sentiments, one of them being that they were experiencing a historic moment where, the cultures of the worlds are encountering each on a level playing field for the first time (8). In line with the re-inscription of extra-textual engagements into his fictional and essayistic work, Glissant has also included a commentary on his time at UNESCO, in an expansive endnote to *Poétique de la relation* where he recalled M'Bows 'heroic work' and argues that the struggle about M'Bows vision fought within UNESCO mainly concerned the meaning of the term 'culture'.

In Glissant's view, “Some of the Western officials who had served in this organization a long time were offended by the arrival of citizens from the countries of the south, seeing this as a sort of betrayal of the ideal of 'culture' that, according to them, had governed its foundation“ (PR 217). He then goes on to claim that their strategy of viewing culture as equivalent with the governments of nation-states was “no innocent mistake” (PR 219), he argued that it was a deliberate strategy of persevering the privileges of Western governments in a powerful institution. “For if they had been willing to consider that a culture is a totality, a participating *écho-monde*, by the same token they would have been willing to relinquish their exclusive privilege to 'culture' and its administration“ (PR 217) – and lost their jobs.

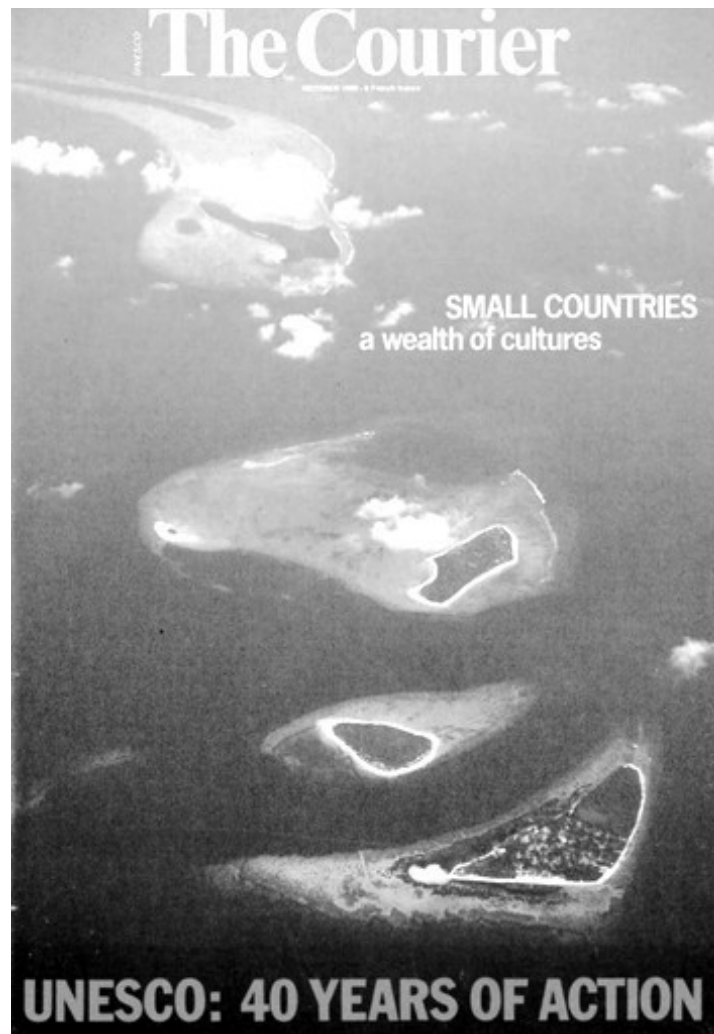


Illustration 6: Cover of the *UNESCO Courier* issue *Small Countries – A Wealth of Cultures* (October 1986).

In Glissant's view, the rejection of M'Bow's proposal of a 'global analysis' of structural global injustice as 'useless or dangerous', the Western governments that exercised the greatest influence on UNESCO wasted an opportunity to “weave the beginnings of this global Relation [...] precisely at the point at which all the wealth of the imagination and of poetics should have been altered. Poetics, in an international Organization!” (PR 219). Although Glissant's conception of cultural diversity was only partially compatible with the kind of universality espoused by the official doctrine of human rights, *Poétique de la Relation* made the case that real political issues would get obliterated when the media blindly defended the 'freedom of the press' instead of “finding a new equilibrium in the space of the world for the floods of information and their cultural cargo” (PR 219). As a compromise between the official conception of culture endorsed by UNESCO and Glissant's own conception of the *Tout-Monde*, the *Courier* promoted a radical equality of all the cultures of the world, through their representation on individual covers of the magazine as well as structurally through the translation into as many languages as possible. Although the *Courier* was

edited in Paris, it was not tied to a particular geography, or a set readership, but instead aimed at being relevant to all the cultures of the world through its selection of themes. This editorial line should not be misinterpreted as a *relevance to the greatest number of readers by all means*, as one could ascribe it to mass media outlets. Instead, what is being provoked on the part of the reader is an experience of difference while reading, and a decentering of one's own location in the larger 'non-totalitarian totality of the world'. What the *Courier* issues attest to is that Glissant's collaboration with UNESCO not only offered him the possibility to reach a far greater audience for the dissemination of his ideas than he would have with his own publications. The experience, moreover, served as a space to experiment with what Noudelmann refers to as a “*brève philosophie d'un baroque mondial*” (a brief philosophy of a global baroque) (2018, 255), or what Michael Dash has referred to as Glissant's practice of using the editorial project to apply his theory of creolisation from the Caribbean to a global scale (1995, 18).

In terms of the community constituted by the *Courier*, I would like to refer back to Anderson's influential study on *Imagined Communities* (2006). Despite the critique this work has received from postcolonial scholars (Chatterjee 1999), I consider its central argument still valid as a mode of studying how modern communities are imagined through the media such as journals, newspapers and novels. As Anderson writes with regards to the imagined community at the basis of the modern nation-state project, they are 'imagined', in that they shares a sense “of the conception of the world and our point in time” in the specific sense of a “steady onward clocking of homogenous, empty time”. Referring to the example of the arrangement of the different headlines and images on the cover of a newspaper, Anderson elaborates the function of the newspaper in the context of a nation-state by asking:

“Why are these events so juxtaposed? What connects them to each other? Not sheer caprice. Yet obviously most of them happen independently, without the actors being aware of each other or of what the others are up to. The arbitrariness of their inclusion and juxtaposition (a later edition will substitute a baseball triumph for Mitterrand) shows that the linkage between them is imagined” (2006, 33).

What links this seemingly random juxtaposition is their 'coincidence in time' “their simultaneous surfacing in a given moment in a serial mass publication” (Edwards 2003, 115). In a similar but slightly different manner, the selection of themes for the *Courier* issues might appear random to someone who does not share Glissant's conception of 'culture as totality' and 'planetary time'. Consider in this regard, for instance, the juxtaposition of issues dedicated to *Baroque* (September 1987), *Man the Biosphere* (October 1987), *Life Under Water* (November 1987), *Japan* (December 1987), *Circus An International Art* (January 1988), *Man and Animals* (February 1988).

In Anderson's account, the first newspapers were 'appendages of the market' that brought together, “on the same page, *this* marriage with *that* ship, *this* price with *that* bishop“, to represent

the structure of a colonial world. Once politics gained control over newspapers it was their connection to a particular location that mattered, leading to the scenario where, as Anderson writes, “A colonial creole might read a Madrid newspaper if he got the chance (but it would say nothing about his world), but many a peninsular official, living down the same street, would, if he could help it, not read the Caracas production“ (2006, 62).

With Glissant running the *Courier*, the scenario was almost inverted. In a world whose underlying unity is not compromised by the logic of the market and politics, the descendant of a colonial creole was running a global cultural journal that was not tied to a particular geography and claimed to be relevant to all cultures of the world. From this angle, the appeal of editing a global cultural journal to Glissant appears in a different light. The community created by the *Courier* was not the mythical Batouto nation, it was also not a loose network of artists and writers, but a global readership that potentially develops a shared sensibility or imaginary of the world. Although the readers of the *Courier* were inevitable part of individual nation-states, a medium like the *Courier* allowed them not to rely on media that is biased through a nationalist view of the world. In the same way that the imaginary basis of the nation-state is discursively reproduced through the media, leading to a main-streaming of ideas and tastes, a small publication like the *Courier* points to the possibility of producing alternative non-statist communities by identifying with the particular (written and visual) language spoken by a journal.

In contrast to national media, which in Anderson's view reproduces “the idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time” as a “solid community moving steadily down (or up) history” (2006, 118), an international cultural journal like the *Courier*, evokes a radically different sense of community, a community that can be international, transnational or constitute a different sense of nation altogether. With regards to the role played by journals and periodicals at the time of the Harlem Renaissance to construct a conception of international or transnational blackness, “a trans-national community of 'race““, in his study *The Practice of Diaspora*, (2003, 115), Brent Hayes Edwards diverts from Anderson by “asking whether the periodical can function not simply as the 'technical means for 're-presenting' the kind of imagined community that is the nation,' but more complexly, also and at the same time as the 'technical means' for representing the imagined community of a diaspora“ (115). Although Edwards' main interest is in the practices of translation from French to English media in creating a collective sense of 'blackness', the imaginative work done by the periodicals he studies serves as a productive contrast to the work done by the *Courier* (115-16). Instead of relying on a shared cosmopolitan culture – analogous to a sense of 'blackness' that still had to be constructed in the 1920s –, the *Courier* addressed a world-community that did not perceive itself as such, akin to

Glissant's description of the *Batouto*. Instead of being an instrument in the hand of a particular political system (top-down), it could be seen as provoking the, (bottom-up) invention of new political forms that are compatible with an egalitarian vision of 'all the differences of the world'.

In sum, I contend that Glissant's collaboration with the *Courier* allowed him to create two kinds of communities. On the one hand a community of writers in instances where he included those authors he considered as producers of a *Tout-Monde* literature to contribute to certain issues. On the other hand, and more importantly, it can, be considered a project of creating a larger community of readers. How this community was formed and what its characteristic were could be described in Anderson's terms an imagined community sharing a 'conception of the world and our point in time'.

4.4.2. Creating a World-Community of Writers – The *International Parliament of Writers* (1993-2003)

The previous sub-section described the way in which Glissant created a community of readers sharing a similar sense of the diversity of the cultures of the world through his editorial work at the *UNESCO Courier*. The ensuing study will, in turn, look at Glissant's engagement for the *International Parliament of Writers* (IPW) and its initiative of the *International Cities of Refuge Network* (ICORN) as a way of creating a community of writers. In the larger context of this chapter, the IPW and the ICORN serve as concrete examples of the overtly political dimension of a Glissantian community in the sense that it makes visible concrete connections between the more abstract conceptual work pursued in sections 4.2. and 4.3., and political institutional concerns, some of which will be further pursued in chapter 5.

In the immediate aftermath of the assassinations of several Algerian writers in July 1993, more than 60 writers created an international solidarity organisation for writers who were persecuted by their respective state authorities. Glissant joined an executive committee of the IPW that was also made up of authors such as Breyten Breytenbach, Adonis, Jacques Derrida, Salman Rushdie, Christian Salmon and Pierre Bourdieu. In the years following its inauguration, Glissant served as vice-president of three IPW presidents, Salman Rushdie (1994-1997), Wole Soyinka (1997-2000) and Russell Banks (2000-2003), before it dissolved in 2003 and gave way to the ICORN, which is still in existence today. From its inception, the IPW put in place a network of 31 so-called Cities of Asylum that offered refuge to persecuted writers and artists. Today, as per the website of the organisation, the ICORN comprises more than 70 cities that constitute a transnational archipelago operating on a sub-national scale (ICORN Cities of Refuge). The archipelago of the ICORN's cities of refuge network is based on the willingness of individual mayors or donors to finance the travel and living expenses of writers who are persecuted in their respective nation-states

and apply at the ICORN to be granted refuge. As the ICORN states on its website:

“The commitment by these cities is both very concrete and deeply symbolic: the agent for change (the writer/artist) escapes from imminent threat and persecution; the host city offers sanctuary; and the values of hospitality, solidarity and freedom of expression become further enshrined in the ethos of that city. ICORN protects and promotes an increasingly wide range of writers, artists and human rights defenders, including bloggers, novelists, playwrights, journalists, musicians, poets, non-fiction writers, visual artists, cartoonists, singer/songwriters, translators, screenwriters and publishers. ICORN enables them to continue to express themselves freely in a place where they are safe, but not silent. Through digital media, they can reach audiences to whom they were denied access before leaving. And through local and ICORN networks, their voices can also be heard by new audiences in their host cities and beyond.”

The 'concrete and symbolic' nature of the ICORN's work, as well as its inherent belief in the political power of 'poets' are a manifestation of Glissant's own conception of the political nature of literature. As was the case with his editorial work for the *Courier*, Glissant's work for the IPW has, however, not been studied in detail, and not with regards to its potentially wide-ranging political implications. When his organisational engagement with the IPW has received attention in the secondary literature, it usually occupies but an anecdotal role serving as proof that Glissant remained 'politically engaged' in the 1990s. As I will argue in this sub-section, taking Glissant's initiative for the IPW and its specific political theoretical implications seriously, can be instructive for a study of his political practice more generally.

At the Strasbourg opening conference in 1993 Glissant spoke on the theme *La grand scène du monde*, pointing out the paradoxical tension between “*le désir de la nation, refus de la nation*” (a desire and refusal of the nation), that lay for him at the basis of IPW. “*Exils, errances, déracinements, ré-enracinements, citoyennes multiples, désir de la nation, refus de la nation ... sont autant de figures de la précipitation chaotique du monde actuel*”⁴¹⁰ (quoted in Lasowski 2015, 128-29). As I have remarked several times, the apparent paradoxes in Glissant's philosophy, or the conventional imperative to choose between two political options, did for him not lead towards a stifling impossibility but were primary sights from which a poetic thought emerged and could be further developed in the sense of the previously quoted principle of 'not only ... but', which for Glissant, “broadens the perception of the real until it becomes a sort of whirlwind, relativizing our first idea of reality with a second that spins into vertigo” (FM 205-06). As I have also shown, Glissant's position towards the nation-state was an ambivalent one throughout his career. Whereas his engagement for the *Front des Antillais et Guyanais pour l'Autonomie* (LAGDHD) in the early 1960s or the *Projet biologique du monde* (2006) (see 3.2.3., 3.2.4.) were clearly designed to imagine an alternative national project for Martinique and federalist vision for the Caribbean, his

410“Exiles, wanderings, uprootings, re-rootings, multiple citizenships, the desire of the nation, the refusal of the nation ... these are all figures of the chaotic precipitation of the current world”, my translation

work around local, regional and imaginary communities in his fictional work pointed towards an exploration of altogether different political formats. In this sense, Glissant's position at the time of his speech at the IPW is in line with this simultaneous endorsement of a specific kind of nation, and the refusal of another that is conceived in exclusive terms of a 'single roots identity'. This ambivalent positioning vis-à-vis the nation-state translates into the abstract political model of the 'small country', a model which he introduced as early as *L'Intention poétique* and maintained up until his last publications through his repeated insistence "I belief in the future of small countries" (IP 153), a notion whose practical political and theoretical implications I will discuss in the following, in terms of its application to the city as a specific kind of 'small country'.

Inclusive Cities of Refuge and Exclusive Nation-States

A speech by Jacques Derrida's at the 1997 conference of the IPW titled *Cosmopolites de tous les pays, encore un effort!*, which was later published as *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2005), illustrates how Glissant's 'belief in small countries' overlaps with the conception of a (relatively) autonomous city offering refuge to threatened writers, on the basis that, as Derrida affirmed, "Hospitality is culture itself and not simply one ethic among others" (16). In the speech, Derrida called for a 'new cosmopolitics' that would bring about "numerous and, above all, autonomous 'cities of refuge', each as independent from the other and from the state as possible, but, nevertheless, allied to each other according to forms of solidarity yet to be invented" (4). Derrida continued: "If we look to the city, rather than to the state, it is because we have given up hope that the state might create a new image for the city. This should be elaborated and inscribed in our Statutes one day" (6).

Christian Salmon, the IPW president from 1993 to 2003, takes up Derrida's claim about the progressive potential of cities on a historical basis by arguing that "since the Middle Ages, cities have been more free-thinking than states' and have more readily offered refuge" (1999, 79). His response the murder of the Algerian poet Matoub Lounès in a 1999 edition of the *Courier*, warrants to be looked at for the numerous connections he draws between Glissant's philosophical project and the *Cities of Asylum* forming an 'archipelago of the imagination', in which "the inaudible and unheard words of everyone who is being oppressed by authority, the cries of the world are heard", with direct reference Derrida and Glissant (80). Contrasting the IPW, as a 'strange parliament' and a 'parliament of adversity', to the functions of a state parliament, Salmon points out that the IPW is a "parliament without power" (78) and that it can only claim to represent "the boundless kingdom of the imagination", "the united states of the mind (calm and turbulent, broad and narrow, ordered and deranged)" (78). Salmon continues by emphasising that its "MPs have no qualification other than the fact that they have been driven from their countries, which means that they have been elected,

not by voters who have faith in them, but by censors who refuse to tolerate their writing“ (78).

As Salomon's article emphasises, the IPW did not define itself in opposition to the nation-state, nor as a counter-force in international relations (80). Instead it maintains relations with the established political system while it aims at exercising influence on its policy through discursive interventions. Salmon, for example, advocates for a different kind of democracy by insisting that “there can be no democracy without solidarity, no civilisation without hospitality and that culture cannot develop in a closed society” (79). In his view, the writers forming part of the IPW conceive their work not as 'entertainment' or 'information' but as the 'lifeblood of democracy', based on the assumption that “The way that society protects its fictional writings, art and creative activity, is just as important a measure of vitality of a democracy, as the turnout in elections, the number of parties or simply the freedom of information“ (79). The IPW could thus be seen as a tool of criticism of political communities that do not protect the right of writers to express themselves, as much as it forms part of an initiative to build alternative political models that would. Salmon's proposition of referring to the degree of legal protection writers and artists enjoy in specific nation-states as an indicator for the well-being of democracy is remarkable in that it demonstrates, once again, the fundamental importance of poets for the well-being of communities, a quality Glissant also associated with the poet as an abstract political theoretical figure. How exactly the city model, as it is promoted by the IPW on both abstract and concrete levels, also concerns debates around the institutional form of the nation-state, an issue that will be elaborated further below (see also 5.3.).

In sum, on a regional and global level, the IPW thus conceived itself as engaged in a political struggle against the homogenisation of culture enforced by multinational media conglomerates, and exclusive or homogenous nation-state identities, by advocating a kind of 'diversity' fostered by protecting minorities and establishing “contact between those who speak and write and those who have been silenced”, in Rancière's terms. In a direct reference to Deleuze's charge for the task of political literature to 'invent a missing people', as taken up in Glissant's *Sartorius*, Salmon claims that the writers forming the IWP “represent that people, for whom we have formed a parliament,” to whom he refers as the 'missing people' (80) (4.3.1.). He continues to refer to this 'missing people' as Kabyle fighters in Algeria, Palestinians, the Yanomani in the Amazon basin, the Ogoni in Nigeria and the 'nation of refugees' (80). From a Glissantian angle, Salmon's claim that the IPW *represents* the voices of these communities might appear problematic. In several instances, Glissant clearly opted against a representational stance that would claim to speak on behalf of a specific community (see for example LAGHD and *Projet biologique* in 3.2.4.). Instead, he emphasised that, through the protection of the lives of authors, the collectives whose imaginary of the world these individuals express, were being defended.

The City as a 'Small Country'

Glissant's own commentary on the work of the IWP can be found in the very last essay of his *Traité du Tout-Monde* (1997), which is a republication of a speech he made in Strasbourg in 1997 under the title *La Ville, refuge des voix du monde*. From a formal point of view, the inclusion of the oral speech, once more, underlines the way Glissant inscribed political actions into the realm of literature, in the way I have described it in the two previous chapters (2.3., 3.3.). Glissant began the speech by insisting that the 'cities of refuge' should be more than charity organisations or the expression of humanitarianism. More important than the protection of a universal 'freedom of expression', was for him the possibility of creating a community of writers in the form of a world-wide network, one that would allow for mutual exchanges and sharing of knowledge to take place, which would turn this initiative into a truly militant exercise “*qui font de cette entreprise un exercice véritablement militant, une participation active au rendez-vous généralisé 'du donner et du recevoir'*”⁴¹¹ (TTM 249). The sense of 'militancy' Glissant advocates for here, is in my view characteristic for his politics of relation in general. It detects radicalness in areas that are usually not visible, appear to have little influence, or are considered ineffective in bringing about social change on a larger political scale. It thus requires a degree of detachment from a traditional conception of politics as a struggle for power (see 1.2.1.). In the black radical tradition, particularly in its French variant, *militantism* has in this regard distinguished from *activism* in its aversion to publicity, populism and staging of grand events. Instead, it is associated with a steady, invisible, and uncompromising commitment to a particular ideal, thus resembling the 'slow work' of literature described by Dimock. As Noudelmann writes about this phase of Glissant's life, the 'militant energy' he associated with the IPW differs from the revolutionary ideas of the 1960s and 1970s in that “his thought emancipates itself from old Marxist patterns and takes freedom, the imagination, and creations seriously that cannot be reduced to fixed ideologies and have the potential to inspire a new local and global politics, modifying the conception of nations and attacking political and religious oppressions from all fronts”⁴¹² (2018, 327). Deliberately emphasising the need to steer clear of old ideologies or partisan politics in the overall set-up of the IPW in order to ensure a more productive combination of 'cultural politics', he stated the following conviction: “*C'est quand elle se libère des parti pris politiques et de leurs limitations que l'action culturelle rencontre le plus véritablement la dimension politique, laquelle éclaire pour nous à la fois le pays où nous vivons et le monde qui nous sollicite. L'imaginaire, l'échange, la Relation*”⁴¹³ (TTM 250).

411 “that turn this project into a truly militant practice, an active participation at the generalised meeting of 'give-and-take'”, my translation.

412 “il s'émancipe des vieux schémas du marxisme, donnant du crédit à la liberté, à l'imaginaire, à la création qui ne sont pas réductibles à des idéologies et inspirent une nouvelle politique, locale et globale, modifiant la conception des nations et ciblant tous les front de l'oppression politique et religieuse”, my translation.

413 “Only when it liberates itself from taking the sides of political parties and their limitations can cultural action encounter the

Important to note about this quote is that, an integral part of this relational politics also includes practical administrative and institutional challenges that make up the functioning of an international organisation, or any network of solidarity for that matter. This belief is encapsulated by his affirmation that, “*Tout réseau de solidarité est en ce sens une vraie Poétique de la Relation*” (Every solidarity network is in this sense a true Poetics of Relation) (TTM 249). The fact that the administrative activities of the ICORN and its partner cities, are direct expressions of a 'poetics of relation', points to the importance of not unduly limiting the focus on poets and artists in the search for progressive agents of a politics of relation.

As alluded to earlier, the city offers a fitting resonance ground for Glissant's 'belief in small countries', which seems to be informed by his experience of political realities on another relatively confined geography, the island. Just as islands belong to a regional framework in the form an archipelago, for Glissant “*La ville est régionale dans la nation, elle est nationale dans le système du monde, mais elle revient à sa particularité quand il s'agit de consentir au particulier de l'Autre*”⁴¹⁴ (TTM 250). This quote illustrates that he understood the political role of the city in metaphorical terms standing for the abstract concept of an island as well as in concrete and practical terms. Although Glissant is not usually associated with urbanity and rather seen against the background of the tropical vegetation and landscape of the Caribbean, it is noteworthy that Glissant did not advocate for a 'return to nature', but instead accommodated his political thought to the realities of the 'urban jungles' of big cities like Paris and New York. This actual dimension of his abstract political thought warrants to be further explored.

The City as an Alternative Political Model – If Mayor's Ruled the World and the Sanctuary City

Glissant's organisational work around the city as a productive institutional political form, can be linked to more wide-ranging political theoretical debates concerning the role of the city in the nation-state, and to the contemporary debate around political borders and movements of migration, as I propose to discuss at greater length in the following chapter (5.2., 5.3.). Without venturing too far into this debate at this point, I will substantiate the political importance of the ICORN both in conventional and broader political terms by briefly pointing to Benjamin R. Barber's claims on the progressive role played by mayors in contemporary international relations, as well as the model of the *Sanctuary City* or *City of Asylum*.

The political tradition to which the ICORN can be said to belong can, for example, be detected in Barber's thesis in his book *If Mayors Ruled the World* (2013) and the *Global Parliament*

political dimension in its truest form, revealing to us both the country where we live and the world that is calling us. The imaginary, the exchange, the Relation”, my translation.

414 “the city is regional in the nation and national in the system of the world, but it returns to its particularity when it becomes a question of consenting to the others particularity”, my translation.

of *Mayors* to which it gave rise. Based on the conviction that the nation-state “was the perfect political recipe for the liberty and independence of autonomous peoples and nations” but that, in the contemporary moment, “It is utterly unsuited to interdependence. The city, always the human habitat of first resort, has in today's globalizing world once again become democracy's best hope” (2013, 3), Barber calls the city, “the most networked and interconnected of our political associations, defined above all by collaboration and pragmatism, by creativity and multiculturalism” (4). Barber's insistence to grant cities a superior geopolitical status that would allow its citizens to “participate locally and cooperate globally” (5) can be read as referring back to Glissant's slogan, 'Act locally, think globally' (PHR 46). Especially in the context of recent events of the so-called European migration crisis (5.2.), the potentially progressive force of cities has become more prominent. It has, for example been associated with initiatives like those of the Italian mayors Leoluca Orlando (Palermo), and Domenico Lucano (Riace). Orlando's advocacy for a 'right to mobility' and the abolition of the residence permit in institutions such as expressed by the *Palermo Charter 2015*, as well as his personal practice of welcoming migrants at the harbour as 'citizens of Palermo' (van der Haak 2016), share many characteristics of a Glissantian politics of relation through its combination of theory and practice, as well as a pronounced emphasis on symbolic actions. The same could be said about Lucano's struggle in Riace. In the late 1990s Lucano declared the small town of Riace a 'town of hospitality' and actively called on refugees to settle in Riace by offering them apartments and training opportunities after the town was becoming largely abandoned by local residents looking for work in Italy's northern regions (Giuffrida 2018). Since then, hundreds of migrants have revitalised the town of about 2000 inhabitants, and Riace has been internationally hailed a success of 'integration'. The potential model character of Lucano's politics drew the attention of the right-wing Italian government and led to the arrest of Lucano on the grounds of that he arranged 'marriages of convenience' between local and foreign men and women to prevent them from being persecuted by Italy's immigration law. The initiatives of these two mayors are testimonies to what is at stake in the power struggle between mayors and the governments of nation-states.

Another political model, that has emerged in the context of recent struggles around immigration in a European context has been the concept of the Solidarity City or Sanctuary City. As the website of the Solidarity City Project proclaims, it is engaged in a struggle to turn cities into 'zones of refuge' that operate *underneath* or *parallel* to the level of the nation-state:

“A city no one is deported of, in which everyone can move freely and without fear. A city where no one is asked for papers or status, a city where no one is illegal. These are the demands and visions of a Solidarity City. In such a city, everyone shall have the right live and work. Everyone shall have access

to education and health care. Everyone shall be able to participate actively in the cultural and political city life – no matter what 'legal' and financial status they have, no matter what race, gender, sexuality, religion...“ (Solidarity City).

Instead of engaging the official policies on the level of the nation-state, through the support of parties or the formation of alternative parties, the Solidarity City “is a practice, that tries to circumvent national laws and guidelines and uses local institutional resources to resist against the structural exclusion of marginalised groups” (Lippert and Rehaag 2013). The Sanctuary City thus effectively resists the policies implemented on a nation-state level and creates a different 'world' on a small geographic scale. In concrete terms, this can turn into practices where 'illegal immigrants' are not treated as such in public institutions or that their deportations are obstructed by the institutions of the city. The movement for Sanctuary Cities has its origins in Canadian and US cities and localities in the 1980s, and ranges from a minimalistic stance where local administrations and police departments refrain from cooperating with national immigration authorities, towards more extensive practices where cities issue municipal social ID cards that effectively grant people the possibility of belonging to more than one political community (Dietrich 2019). The trust put into the city as a progressive political format by the IPW has thus taken on a heightened significance in the context of the 21st century, which has been referred to as the 'century of migration' by several observers. In what ways a Glissantian thought on communities and politics more generally can contribute to these debates will be elaborated in the following chapter.

In sum, and to tie this discussion on Glissant's activism for the IPW more closely back to the main work pursued throughout this chapter, it can be framed as a practical realisation of an idea he developed over several decades, namely to 'make visible', 'bring into existence' a community of writers as a network that lives in different places around the world, yet share a sense of solidarity and a set of political commitments which tend to set them in confrontation with the local authorities in their respective nation-states. Reading Glissant's activism for the IPW deliberately as a strategy of community creation thus opens up the analytical lens about his politics away from a conventional view that identifies this strand of his political activism *narrowly* as a promotion of human rights. The 'community of writers' the IPW sought to create is a dispersed community in which the writers are both solitary in their respective cities, but in solidarity with one another because they share a same vulnerability vis-à-vis their respective nation-states.

Section Summary

In more concrete fashion than the previous sections of this chapter, this section depicted the intricate connections between Glissant's textual and non-textual engagement for the creation of world-communities. The two selected case studies made the case for an extension of conventional

understanding of Glissant's activist work (1.3.3.), to include his editorial work at an international cultural journal (4.4.1.), and his commitment for an association of writers (4.4.2.) through the lens of community creation that concretised the fictional and abstract conceptual work in the sections 4.2. and 4.3.

When framed in terms of a movement of marronage, Glissant's editorial work at the *Courier* could be seen as a line of flight not to the fringes or outside of the system of nation-states, but to its very centre. It exercises a marronage *within and without* in the sense that it collaborates with influential organisations to develop a vision that goes beyond their political horizons. Glissant's association with UNESCO, in that sense, allowed him to produce a periodical that, in form and content, moved outside the realm of the nation-state and the promotion of national cultures towards the promotion of the kind of non-totalitarian totality as which he perceived the landscape of the Tout-Monde. In the case of the IPW and ICORN, the association between the creation of a world-community of poets and the historical phenomenon of marronage can be made even more apparent. By granting writers refuge, whose lives are threatened by their respective governments, the ICORN effectively established and maintains a zone of refuge equivalent to a dispersed metaphorical maroon community. Linked to an archipelago of cities across the world, the poets who are part of this dispersed community resist the political system in their respective home countries in concrete and visible ways, thus re-emphasising the, at times, highly politically charged nature of writing.

In terms of the community aspect of Glissant's work for the *Courier*, I have repeatedly stressed the need to view it as a form of collectively creating communities of (contributing) writers and readers that are bound together in a process of reading and writing – thus counterbalancing the individualist line of his work. By referring back to the notion of an 'imagined community', such as it was suggested in the work of Benedict Anderson, made it possible to sketch the contours of the community of *Courier*-readers. In contrast to major national and international media outlets that are, in Anderson's reading, mainly invested in maintaining the political imagination of existing nation-states through the reproduction of a shared sense of time, space and belonging, through the reproduction of a political consensus, or in an expansion of their reach according to a capitalist logic, the *Courier*'s goal under Glissant's leadership was to depict the greatest amount of cultural and linguistic diversity as possible, in order to provide its readers with a privileged view, and shared sense of the egalitarian nature of the cultures of the Tout-Monde. As for the communities established through the IPW and the ICORN, they are a concrete and nameable collective of poets in the form of *solitary* writers who are in *solidarity* with one another through their shared resistance to the oppression they witness or experienced at the hands of their respective governments. Viewing their solidarity in these terms emphasised the possibility of maintaining multiple identities and

political allegiance that differ from a conventional perception of nationalist allegiance.

With respect to Glissant's more general political practice, his engagement for the *Courier* can, firstly, be read as signalling a willingness on Glissant's part to collaborate with existing institutions whose work to a large extent overlaps with his own political project. In 2.3.2. I have discussed another case of such a collaboration in the context of his collaboration with the French state. The synergies between the UNESCO under M'bow's leadership and Glissant's own political project were strong enough to foster an alliance that offered him a possibility to reach a far greater audience with his ideas than he would have with his writings. This open-ness to collaborate with influential institutions and organisations implies an inclusive or relational approach that is not dissociative or in the pursuit of radical oppositionality. Placing his own inside an existing discourse, Glissant's editorial strategy at the *Courier* was, for example, not one of creating enemies but geared towards the promotion of a pluralistic vision of 'culture' through a combination of form and style, in the selection of themes, writers and the juxtaposition of images, instead of formulating a political programme in an editorial format. This willingness to 'work with power', – which, as it turned out, was a constant option for Glissant's politics of relation –, has been criticised from critics who endorse a radical detachment from any kind of institutionalised power. Chris Bongie has for example written dismissively about Glissant's, “diversity-championing poetics [being] 'soiled' by its conceptual overlap with the 'ideological face of global capitalism'”. Referring to his time at the *Courier* he continues, “this former UNESCO employee quite manifestly *has* wanted, and has been asked, to function as an 'expert' in cultural communication, offering practical, administrative suggestions to a range of patrons“ (2008, 362).

In the context of his work for the IPW, the initiative can be considered as a literal manifestation of the belief in the political importance of poets and of the conceptual ideas mapped out in his fictional and theoretical writings. The combination of *parliament* and *writers* can hence also be considered to be highly significant for Glissant's political thought on democracy, to which I will turn at greater length in the following chapter. The IPW's structure and its investment in establishing parallel political structures and communities that operate outside the framework of the nation-state was particularly noteworthy. This combination of detachment, of the creation of new communities along different models, while at the same time, claiming the right to intervene in the political affairs of established political communities, can again be linked back to the notion of marronage as an abstract political model as described by Yarimar Bonilla in terms of 'strategic entanglement' (4.1.2.) Observations such as these allude to the possibility of exploring the theoretical implications of Glissant's political practice as a movement of marronage in more abstract terms, particularly as it concerns the formal set-up of communities (small countries, cities, nation-

states), their boundaries and migrations between them, a line of inquiry that will be pursued in the following chapter.

Chapter Summary

This chapter demonstrated the intricate connections between what I have conceptualised as Glissant's movement of marronage and his ongoing concern with the creation of alternative communities. Studying his work through the lens of community creation has proven to be a highly productive angle through which aspects of his oeuvre could be identified as *political*, that have hitherto been overlooked by studies relying on conventional conceptions of political engagement. With respect to modern and postmodern conceptions of the community, as discussed in relation to Nancy, as well as against the background of debates in Afro-Caribbean thought on non-sovereignty, I have repeatedly emphasised how Glissant's conception of community cannot be identified as belonging to a singular theory of community, but that his prioritisation of the world-view upheld by specific communities over their form allows for his specific brand of 'communitarianism' and cosmopolitanism to be compatible with a variety of institutionalised forms of community. In other words, Glissant's specific sense of cosmopolitanism is not per se tied to set standards of scale (local-global) or belonging (filiation-relation) and thus warrants to be identified as a specific kind, a world-community in a Glissantian sense.

The following concluding observations are dedicated to *how* he worked to create these kinds of communities and *what* their defining characteristics are. In a first instance, Glissant's political practice of community building was marked by a constant mixing of the divisions between what is real and what is imagined, between literary activity and extra-textual political engagement. Some of Glissant's communities were 'imagined' in the double-sense that Glissant single-handedly 'dreamed them up' (i.e. the Batouto people). Others were 'imagined' in the sense that they reach a size and a level of global dispersion that everyday face-to-face contact is no longer possible (i.e. the global community of *Courier* readers). By constantly re-inscribing extra-textual practices into his written work, and actively developing organisations or institutions that reflect the ideas elaborated in his literature, Glissant's political strategy of community creation consisted precisely in bridging the distance between the two senses of 'imagined communities', as an expression of his belief in a utopia as something that 'allows us to realize the impossible' (2005, 5). In line with the discursive character of his political practice (see chapter 2.0.), a key aspect of Glissant's imagination of communities are the 'epics' or 'founding myths' he invented for them. Not confined to the traditional sense of these terms, the narratives at the basis of these communities took the form of a collection of poems, a critical essay about the IPW or the account of a fictional world-community appearing in

his novels. Across these different genres, forms and media, Glissant constructed a founding narrative for world-communities that is marked by Glissant's overall philosophical project. The implicit binary opposition shaping these (radically plural) communities is a conflict between those whose world-view allows for the conception of rhizomatic identities and those who uphold an identity of single-roots. Glissant's communities are thus, by definition, anti-racist. Bearing in mind his considerations pertaining to Martinique's status in the 1960s (4.1.2.), and his analysis of the geopolitical landscape at the onset of the 21st century (4.3.0.), the charge or the necessity to create communities on this epistemological basis emerged for Glissant precisely when the establishment of *such a community* is made structurally impossible. As much as Glissant's communities therefore contain a 'disruptive moment' in the sense associated with the work of Jacques Rancière (1.2.2.), by claiming a right for this invisible community to participate in the global political landscape of established political communities, Glissant politics of relation around the production of community also expands Rancière's notion of a political of literature conceived as "literature doing politics simply by being literature" (Rancière), by insisting that *it is not enough to write* (see also 3.2.3.). Through a set of decisions of collaborating with existing institutions Glissant's community thought repeatedly moved out of the text and into the material world. In instances like these, the *solitude* of the writer is connected to the *solidarity* of a collective, *making a community*.

It is in the concrete work of these institutions, in the organisation of events, of public interventions, that a world-community akin to Glissant's fictional Batouto people was re-created. Glissant's conception of political work is, in this sense, fundamentally relational. Instead of being limited to one particular layer of political action, it tries to bring into contact all the levels of political significance: from the smallest letter (the 'o' of the Batouto), to international organisations (like UNESCO). Instead of disappearing into a realm of pure politics or a rarified moment of political upheaval (Rancière), it thus moves into the realm of everyday practices as much as it can always (potentially) migrate into the echelons of the politics of politicians.

With regards to the *form* these communities adopt, Glissant's communities can, in a general sense, all be cast as 'powerless', and as not directly pursuing the goal of turning into sovereign political communities in the traditional sense of the term. Moreover, they are not to be understood as apolitical alternatives to concepts such as the nation, parties, classes, interest groups, social movements or civil society either. As much as the communities Glissant created were transnational they did not reject the concept of the nation-state *per se*. The willingness of liberal democracies to grant refuge to writers fleeing from persecution, as demonstrated by the IPW, serves as an illustration that Glissant's world-communities do not exist in a radically de-linked mode, but maintain relationships with different political systems and institutions for strategic purposes or as a

means of survival. Additionally, they strive to convince them, through discursive means, to expand existing democratic systems to become more inclusionary towards those that remain 'invisible'. The fact that Glissant's world-communities are modelled on the shape of the 'small country' also alludes to the possibility for more radical or direct forms of democracy as briefly pointed out about the polis in the fictional Batouto town of Onkolo (4.3.1.). Noteworthy in that regard was that, in contrast to established discourses on cosmopolitanism that tend to associate the local as small and the global as large, Glissant unsettles these associations about world-communities by insisting that small communities can endorse a relational imaginary of the whole-world that might remain unimaginable for larger communities. A community can be small but worldly, as much as a transnational community might be small in size.

Rather than appearing as closed circles or pyramidal structures, the abstract form that is most befitting for a depiction of Glissant's communities is the network. Networks, as Carole Levine explained are politically emancipatory in their resistance to closed forms, like disciplines or political boundaries (2015, 112). Without having to venture deeper into network theory, it is noteworthy that networks also form the basis of the idea of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome, which Glissant referenced prominently, and which I have also mentioned in my reflections on mapping as a method in the preface to this work. The network, Levine argues, can never be apprehended in its totality, because, "its wholeness defies full knowledge" (130). Working with the concept of network is suggestive, since, according to Levine and resembling Glissant's concept of Relation, the motion they are based on to expand, sprawl and spread is "a link between two nodes, there is a network, and it can grow simply by linking new nodes" (117). The different kinds of communities Glissant created through a mix of literary and activist work, offers a set of findings that might be put in a productive conversation with the fields of political and literary theory which I will pursue in greater depth in the ensuing chapter.

Chapter 5:

Political Theoretical Implications of Moving Away

Marronage as an Abstract Political Movement

5.0. Introduction

“If creolization involves ongoing natality, then the process of creolizing political theory indicates moving words, moving concepts, and moving theory. Marronage, for Glissant, is a creolized notion occupying this terrain. Glissant's texts offer greater supporting evidence”
– Neil Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage* (2015, 147)

The three previous chapters were concerned with the description of the three main directions I consider Glissant's political practice to have taken as part of his intellectual movement of marronage. In the process I argued that what characterises Glissant's personal marronage is a flight into the past to envision the future (chapter 2), a flight into the world (chapter 3), and repeated community-creating efforts (chapter 4). By outlining the *conception of marronage* as it emerges from Glissant's work, I have repeatedly explored how Glissant's *writings on marronage* can be considered to be themselves *acts of marronage*, particularly due to the ways in which they repeatedly cut across textual- and extra-textual dimensions and relate these dimensions to one another in creative ways.

As outlined in the introduction (1.4.3.), the general *meaning of marronage* forming the basis of this line of study, and which is informed by Glissant's pronouncements and my own reading of his work, is defined by three aspects. Firstly, a *resistance to the plantation system*, which I understand in a broad sense as a resistance geared against contemporary forms of domination operating through an intersectional matrix of capitalism, racism and sexism, that can in part be traced back to the structure of the historic plantation system. Secondly, a *vital urgency of political creativity* based on the realisation that, after the rupture of the slave trade, colonisation and the integration into neo-liberal globalisation, there are no natural political communities or political models that can be relied upon, hence the need to explore seemingly utopian imaginary and institutional alternatives to the status quo. Thirdly, a fundamental concern with *the invention of a different kind of humanism*, or the idea of what it means to be human. This aspect also pervades the previous two characteristics and directly responds to the plantation's project of dehumanisation and objectification. Whereas the Enlightenment paradigm relied on the subjectification of a large part of humanity into the category of less-than-fully-human, the historic and metaphoric movement of marronage not only asserts the humanity of the formerly dehumanised, through an assertion of the legitimacy of *different ways of being*. Important to emphasise in this regard is that, as my discussion throughout the previous chapters has shown, for Glissant, the movement out of the plantation, be it imaginary, metaphorical or historical, is not cast as a flight from a 'zone of nonbeing' (Roberts 2015,

20) – since the agency, sociality and subjectivity of slaves is never disavowed by Glissant –, but instead one from a universal, singular and static conception of Being (*être*), that the master categorically withheld from the slave, towards more multiple, fluid and changing conceptions of being (*étant*). Phrased differently, Glissant's ontological marronage implies a shift from being-in-isolation towards being-in-relation, a shift I have discussed with an emphasis on its temporal (chapter 2) and spatial dimensions (chapter 3), as well as pertaining to questions of the community that is created in the process of this practice of fugitivity (chapter 4).

As the analysis contained in the previous chapters made apparent, fleeing from the state of ongoing coloniality against the socio-historic background of Martinique was less a matter of physical survival or a fight for freedom than a struggle to 'find oneself' and to establish a socio-cultural balance (4.1.2.). Instead of seriously exploring the potentials of physical decolonial violence as proposed by Fanon (1963, ch. 1),⁴¹⁵ Glissant's work therefore traced a line of flight out towards multiple ways of being that dramatically differ from the singular one inherited from colonialism. Instead of using the master's tools or studying the master's archive, Glissant searched for another way of responding to the calls to 'begin something new' that his predecessors Césaire and Fanon formulated by exploring alternative political pathways.⁴¹⁶ Bearing this overall meaning of marronage for Glissant in mind, this chapter will shift the focus from an engagement with Glissant's personal marronage to a set of abstract considerations concerning the potential implications of Glissant's practice of marronage as *a political model of moving away*. This transition from an exclusive focus on Glissant's personal political practice is due to an interest in imagining the shape his politics of relation takes outside his own life and work, to potentially inspire alternative forms of politics of relation, but also to detect where these practices are already taking place, without being named as such. In a conventional sense, this chapter therefore marks a shift away from the historical and literary into the realm of abstract political thought or theory. As emphasised throughout my thesis, these realms do however directly feed into each another and therefore cannot be viewed as separate from one another.

The main argument driving the analysis in this chapter is that the engagement with Glissant's personal political practice, seen through the lens of an intellectual movement of marronage, invites an exploration of the implications of his political work for theoretical debates concerned with the internal, external, and transversal relations of political communities, as they become apparent in

415 A meditation of this problematic is contained in *La Lézarde* (1958) where the death of the colonial agent Garin ends up being attributed to the forces of the sea, insinuating a kind of 'holy violence' theorised as by Walter Benjamin's *Kritik der Gewalt* (2000).

416 I am referring to Césaire's call that "the time has come for us to abandon all the old routes" (*L'heure est venue d'abandonner toutes les vieilles routes*) (quoted in Breleur et al. 2009) and Fanon's call towards the end of *The Wretched of the Earth*: "We must leave our dreams and abandon our old beliefs and friendships from the time before life began. Let us waste no time in sterile litanies and nauseating mimicry. Leave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them" (1963, 311).

movements of exodus or secession, migration, borders and democracy. This line of enquiry can therefore be considered as *branching off from Glissant's own practice*, as it was situated in and responded to the political issues arising from specific times and places. Instead, it is interested in more general theoretical implications that could be drawn from or imagined based on his political archive. In line with the general interest of this chapter, the material I will consult in this chapter is primarily comprised of the findings in the previous chapters, meaning the shape his politics of relation has taken as I have distilled it in my reading of his work of fiction, life-writing, organisational action and abstract political thought. In addition to references to this general direction of Glissant's own marronage, I will also refer to several pertinent passages taken from his essays, articles and oral statements by Glissant concerning the themes discussed here.

As pointed out in the introduction to this thesis (1.4.3.), Glissant himself showed little interest in participating in debates that are traditionally associated with the discipline of political theory and the canonical figures associated with it. As I will argue in the following sections, by setting his conception of marronage in relation to political theoretical debates concerning the notions of exodus, borders, migration and democracy, his work does, however, suggest several lines of enquiry that effectively link the insights derived from a relational reading of his oeuvre with contemporary discussions in political studies. Due to the overall scope of this thesis, which is primarily concerned with Glissant's politics of relation 'proper', the mode of reading that I am proposing in the following is marked by a *relational perspective* that aims at showing common ground between a variety of abstract or concrete political projects. Instead of proposing in-depth studies of a small selection of concepts, I provide an overview of a larger number of works that all *in some way* engage with the kind of movement performed by marronage. The relative popularity of these seemingly similar notions among left leaning scholars serves to confirm that movements away or outside of established political communities are considered a particularly promising field of study in the contemporary political moment. In contrast to a deep comparative study, this relational approach thus draws on the method of mapping introduced in the preface, allowing me to place Glissant's politics of marronage on a larger firmament of ongoing political struggles, as they are fought in the realm of ideas and 'on the ground', so to speak, thus pre-empting the impression of a singularity of his thought, which would run counter to the main intent of this thesis.

I begin this chapter with a general overview of established concepts in the field of political studies that can be considered as overlapping with the central direction of Glissant's marronage (5.1.). Notions like exodus, secession, desertion and lines of flight, for example, all refer to modes of withdrawal or refusal as potentially progressive political strategies in the contemporary political moment. The second section (5.2.) takes up the analytical thread identified in the previous chapter

concerning the form or general set-up of political communities by interrogating the issue of political borders and migration policies from a Glissantian perspective. The third section (5.3.) extends this line of study by translating his border thought and thinking about migration into a set of concrete policy propositions. In the fourth section (5.4.) I set Glissant's marronage in relation to theoretical discussions around the question of democracy. As I will show, on an abstract level the option of moving out of established political communities discussed throughout 5.1. has immediate consequences for the way one considers the internal make-up and governance of political communities.

As an outlook into the main findings of the research comprised in this chapter, the specificity of Glissant's intellectual marronage emerging from the four different sections appears as a collective practice of fugitivity of those who cultivate a relational imaginary out of the dominant imaginary marked by capitalism, nationalism and the celebration of homogeneity. This line of flight operates both on the imaginary level as well as in the practice of setting up concrete institutions within and beyond the confines of the nation-state. By proposing a political practice that stays continuously on the move, Glissant's marronage emerges as a movement that is not only concerned with escaping *from* a state of oppression *to* a zone of refuge, but as a permanent commitment to affect change in existing political communities and to envision utopian alternatives to them, a commitment that entertains complex entanglements and allegiances with various political actors, and formats, without having to choose between one or the other. In that sense, Glissant's politics of relation in this chapter appears to be marked as both 'utopian' and pragmatic, in the sense that it suggests political models and practices that operate on small, medium and large scales. In disciplinary terms, this line of work confirms that Glissant's poetic work can be brought in productive conversation with more prominent positions in the field of political studies. In the realm of literary studies, it moreover serves to counterbalance a tendency to remain on a general or abstract levels when it comes to identifying the relation between literature and such central political themes as liberation, migration and democracy.

5.1. Marronage and Related Concepts in Political Studies

“Fugitivity, then, is a desire for and spirit of escape and transgression of the proper and the proposed.

It's a desire for the outside, for a playing or being outside,
an outlaw edge proper to the now always improper voice or instrument”

– Fred Moten, *Stolen Life* (2018, 131).

This section suggests a way of positioning Glissant's marronage in the field of political studies by engaging with a set of established concepts that share key affinities with Glissant's work. The direction traced across its three sub-sections is one that can be seen as drawing increasingly closer to my own conceptualisation of Glissant's marronage in concentric circles. It will begin this line of work with a brief interrogation of the notions of exodus and secession that are closely associated with racial, ethnic or religious forms of oppression, as well as a second set of concepts that share a commitment towards exploring possibilities of escape from the kind of domination exercised by the modern capitalist nation-state. In the following sub-section (5.1.1.), I engage with Isabel Lorey's work on the strategy of temporary withdrawal, claiming that practices of fugitivity out of precarity she discusses provide a bridge towards, but still differ from practices of fugitivity emerging from slavery such as they are proposed in the work of Neil Roberts and Fred Moten, which will be presented as the most pertinent theorisations of Glissant's marronage (5.1.2., 5.1.3.). By abstracting from the findings presented in the previous three chapters and highlighting differences and commonalities between Glissant's marronage and these intellectual projects, this section thereby allows for a more specific understanding of Glissant's politics to emerge.

Escaping Racial Oppression and the Biopolitical State – Established Concepts of Flight in Political Theory

Several established notions of 'moving away' can be generally related to Glissant's practice of marronage in the field of political studies. I will here provide a brief overview of these notions, by broadly grouping them, firstly, around collective movements flights performed by religious or racialised minorities away from annihilating forms of oppression, and secondly, individual and collective movements of flight away from the control of the biopolitical state. The intention behind this preliminary work is to highlight the main differences between these established concepts and Glissant's intellectual marronage.

The notion of an exodus was, perhaps most famously, proposed by the Pan-Africanist project of Marcus Garvey and his late 19th century 'Back-to-Africa movement', which was cast as a way of escaping the structural discrimination and exploitation endured by black people in the US (Boukari-Yabara 2014, ch. 1 and 2). Whereas Garvey's project was premised on a shared racial

identity as black people, Zionism, as another collective mode of flight, was predicated on a shared Jewish religion. In both cases, the proposition of exodus was formulated in response to the ongoing subjugation of black people and Jews as less-than-fully human beings in their respective countries. The differences between these projects of return to a land of origin and Glissant's conception and personal practice of intellectual marronage are apparent. As outlined in 2.0., Glissant deemed myths of origin that refer back to a promised land as a way of legitimising the appropriation of a particular piece of land problematic. In theoretic terms, the return to an original state was moreover an impossibility for Glissant, as outlined in 3.3. Instead of moving out of an oppressive system on the basis of a shared racial or religious identity defined in opposition to a political enemy, his understanding and practice of marronage worked towards overcoming these single root identities and the very notion of claiming ownership of, or exclusive belonging to, a particular territory. While these differences are worth noting, they should, nevertheless not be misinterpreted as rejections of the legitimacy of collective modes of flight in response to oppression or extermination. Pointing out these differences is therefore mainly meant to point out that Glissant's marronage was occupied with a different set of concerns.

In a similar vein, one could also point to secession movements as only superficially connected to Glissant's conception of marronage. While a case could be made that the marronage characteristics of Glissant's political thought are generally sympathetic to any initiative that does not take the existing framework of the nation-state as natural, and puts the question of who belongs to which political community at the forefront of debate, as mentioned with regards to the exodus notion, Glissant clearly distanced his philosophy from political projects based on solidarities based on the ties of blood, soil or religious belief. Furthermore, his conceptualisation of marronage, as it emerged throughout the previous three chapters, moved into a direction that was more concerned with establishing *different* grounds for political solidarities and *different* forms of political communities. Instead of creating two nation-states out of one, as is the case in a conventional sense of secession,⁴¹⁷ his political practice invited the question whether one could not find other political models to the dominant framework of the nation-state and majoritarian democracy, while at the same time creating parallel structures beyond and below the state (chapter 4).

A second group of concepts that have found entrance into political theoretical debates, and which can be loosely associated with Glissant's conceptualisation of marronage, are notions that are directly or indirectly geared towards escaping the biopolitical form of governance imposed by the modern nation-state, for which Michel Foucault coined the term biopower. In contrast to the overtly racist or anti-Semitic state projects that led to the movements of exodus and secession above,

⁴¹⁷Secessions commonly refer to “the attempt by some region in a political system to become independent of the rest of the state and rule itself as an autonomous nation“ (Robertson 2002, 438).

Foucault argued that the violence exercised by modern biopolitical states over its population is lethal in a different manner. Whether in the capitalist or socialist variant, biopower “exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavours to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations“ (1990, 137). As Foucault elaborated in the lecture series published *Society Must Be Defended* (2003), this 'positive influence' operates through the inversion of the classical logic of sovereign power to 'take life or let live' and turns into a power that 'makes life or lets die'. Racism is, in this sense, understood more abstractly as the strategy employed by the state to decide whose life can be left to die and whose life is being structurally enhanced. State racism is thus exercised by “the race that holds power and is entitled to define the norm, and against those who deviate from that norm, against those who pose a threat to the biological heritage“ (61). Depending on the kind of society the biopolitical state seeks to 'enhance', the norms employed by the biopolitical state, can be an intersectional interplay of the concepts of racism, xenophobia, sexism and classism. Among the concepts resisting this mode of domination, I consider James C. Scott's thoughts on desertion, Hardt and Negri's proposition of an exodus of the Multitude, and Deleuze and Guattari's lines of flight as being particularly instructive when juxtaposed to Glissant's movement of marronage.⁴¹⁸

Scott's brand of anarchism,⁴¹⁹ is interested in individual and unorganised acts of disobedience and desertion – “such acts as foot-dragging, poaching, pilfering, dissimulation, sabotage, desertion, absenteeism, squatting and flight” (2010, 6-7) as political practices of the 'subordinate classes'. In terms of marronage, these *small* forms of resistance in the context of a biopolitical state, could be cast as acts of *petit marronage*, in which the potential of inspiring collective movements away from the plantation is always inherent. In contrast to Scott, Glissant's marronage does, however, extend beyond the rejection of a given political system, a specific law or disciplinary mechanism, and is moreover, not categorically averse to political hierarchies and state formations, as I have pointed in chapter 4. In its commitment to the imagination of an alternative conception of humanity and its relation to the whole-world it is, moreover, more ambitious or utopian in nature than Scott's anarchism, which is critical of, but does not unsettle the dominant Western paradigm of what it means to be human, and non-human and the basic assumptions underlying the capitalist system.

As a second influential concept in political theory, the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, which I have brought in conversation with Glissant in the conclusion of chapter 3, contains a more pronounced attempt to rethink the fundamental structures underlying the globalised neoliberal

⁴¹⁸To this list one could add Herbert Marcuse's conceptualisation of the Great Refusal as elaborated in *One-Dimensional Man – Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (2007).

⁴¹⁹Scott defines his brand of anarchism as “mutuality, or cooperation without hierarchy or state rule” (2010, xii).

system. In contrast to intellectual currents believing in the 'untapped potential for emancipation of bourgeois modernity'⁴²⁰ (Kempf 2019, 11), the notion an 'Exodus of the Multitude' in Hardt and Negri's work⁴²¹ argues that any possibility for negotiation has broken down, leading to a process of separation or an imaginary 'Exodus of the Multitude' from Empire (24). In concrete institutional terms this means that Hardt and Negri argue for a shift from engaging with state authorities towards an engagement with a larger, over-arching political structure of Empire, that is the complex combination of actors upholding the capitalist system: nation-states, multinational corporations and the media (Ziegler 2019, 308). Resistance to Empire, for Hardt and Negri has to take place outside established political forms and necessarily on a global political level, such as it has been performed by global movements like Occupy and the World Social Forum. At a basic level, Glissant's marronage could be seen as akin to Hardt's and Negri's proposition of an Exodus of the Multitude. Like Hardt and Negri, Glissant was not primarily invested in engaging in antagonisms on the level of the nation-state but considered a global dimension to be of utmost importance for a politics of relation, as outlined throughout chapter 3. In my reading, Glissant's politics of relation does, however place a more pronounced emphasis on the powers of the imagination and what I have conceptualised as the importance of the poet's politics, conventionally translated as cultural politics. Both of these aspects point to the temporal dimension Dimock calls planetary time, and express a believe in the political force of small acts of creativity that are, to some extent, disconnected from experiences of oppression or exploitation, as implied by Hardt and Negri's conceptualisation of the Multitude. Another noteworthy difference concerns the observation that Glissant did not categorically reject the possibility of social progress through the exchange of rational arguments. Instead, I would claim that his abstract conceptualisation of marronage and personal engagement for concrete initiatives, as shown in the previous chapters, indicate an active pursuit of both political models of emancipation: An active engagement *with* the nation-state, through established institutions and main political actors to intervene in existing discourses, and at the same time a move *outside* the parameters that define Empire, as part of a creative project of establishing alternative modes of being. This double-bind of *removal out of the plantation, as historically and metaphorically related to the system of capitalism, while still remaining in relation with it*, is one of the key characteristics of Glissant's marronage, as identified in 2.3., 3.3. and 4.4. in particular.

A third notion that can be brought into conversation with Glissant's marronage, and was most directly developed in conversation with Foucault's arguments on biopower, is the 'line of flight' as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari in the foreword to their book *A Thousand*

420 Victor Kempf associates this intellectual current with the work of Axel Honneth and the belief in the progressive potential of rational deliberation, struggles for recognition and the reformation of existing institutions (2019, 143).

421 Hwa Yol Jun has also proposed reading Glissant's take on globalisation along similar lines (2007, 193).

Plateaus (1987). Introduced in the context of their conceptualisation of the 'rhizome' (1987, 6) (see 1.4.1.), Deleuze and Guattari proposed the rhizome as a way of thinking about connections, heterogeneity, the many, anti-genealogy and 'becoming'. In this context, the 'line of flight' occupies a central following function for the two French philosophers, who were close friends and philosophical interlocutors of Glissant. Writing that, "There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie back to one another. That is why one can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy, even in the rudimentary form of the good and the bad" (9), the line of flight, similarly to Glissant's marronage, never delinks completely from the traditions it diverts from.⁴²² Although Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concepts of rhizome and line of flight as part of a discussion on literary production and a critique of the discipline of psychoanalysis in the foreword to *Two Thousand Plateaus* – and at no point refers to historical marronage as a physical enactment of a line of flight –, the explicit political implications of this concept has been described in terms of a flight out of a 'society machine' whose main function is for capitalism to function smoothly. Instead of readily integrating into this order, the line of flight thus signifies the refusal of this paradigm towards the exploration of new imaginary territories, and thereby takes a step further than the individual acts of refusal or sabotage Scott refers to.

On an individual level, the deterritorialisation enacted through a line of flight also refers to a 'right' to have a *no man's land*, a secret existence outside the 'society machine', a notion resembling Glissant's right to opacity. If one were to replace the 'society machine' or the biopolitical state with the plantation, the notion of the line of flight appears to overlap quite neatly with Glissant's marronage. Glissant's political practice, however, differs from Deleuze and Guattari in so far as it traces a route out of the 'machine' in more concrete, collective and 'worldly' ways than the implied by the highly individualistic practice of the line of flight. While Glissant concurred with Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the rhizome, as a way of writing and living that offers a way out of the epistemology of Western modernity and towards the acknowledgement of other ways of being, it was also informed by anti-colonial struggles and the struggles for a world-community that would take on a rhizomatic or archipelagic form. In that sense, the main differentiation I propose to make between Glissant and Deleuze and Guattari echoes some of the aspects I have mentioned earlier with regards to the differences of his politics with those advanced by postmodern philosophers like Jacques Rancière's (1.2.2.) and Jean-Luc Nancy (4.1.1.). Whereas the ephemeral, the rare, the intangible and the individualistic are strongly emphasised by these French philosophers and

⁴²²As I have pointed out in 1.4.3., the move from binaries to relational entanglement is also woven into all of the three strategies which I have described as forming part of Glissant's marronage. I will discuss exceptions to this general thrust in the conclusion (6.3.).

contemporaries of Glissant, Glissant's own political practice acknowledged the importance of these directions, while at the same time insisting on the necessity of concrete applications and institutionalisations of abstract political ideas, in line with the emphasis placed on 'politics as culture' in the black radical tradition (1.2.3.). The maroon's line of flight, as it emerges from the historic archive and through Glissant's conceptualisation, is such a political practice with a concrete point of departure – namely the dehumanisation enforced by the plantation – and a concrete orientation – namely the fostering of alternative ways of being together in imaginary and institutionalised decolonial communities.

In the main work of this section, I associate Glissant's marronage with several scholarly projects that are more intimately aligned to how I have described Glissant's political practice. The basic idea uniting these different approaches is the proposition to rethink the political potential of *physically moving out of an established political system*, either through *temporary* or *permanent forms of withdrawal*, with the aim of constituting *communities of a different kind* elsewhere. In terms of the specificity and elaborate nature, with which they explore the political theoretical potential of moving away, these projects thus differ significantly from the movements and notions introduced at the onset of this chapter.

5.1.1. Isabel Lorey's Exodus as Temporary Withdrawal

Although it also forms part of traditions of thought concerned with articulating modes of resistance against the biopolitical state, Isabell Lorey's concept of 'temporary withdrawal' differs from the modes of fugitivity discussed so far, in that it associates the movement out of established political communities more prominently with a dynamic of community creation which she refers to as 'constituting'. I will trace the main lines of thought Lorey proposes around these two notions, making the case that her work draws increasingly close to Glissant's intellectual marronage.

The Plebeian's Temporary Withdrawal From Rome

In her essay *Attempt to Think the Plebeian – Exodus and Constituting as Critique* (2008)⁴²³ Lorey refers to a historical conflict that took place in Rome in the 5th century BCE between the plebeians and the Roman aristocracy. She extrapolates an abstract conceptual figure of the 'plebeians', characterised by their position on the “reverse side and the boundary of power” from this conflict. Historically, the plebeians occupied the social role of peasants in the Roman Empire. They were legally free, but only granted limited political rights which led them to being economically indebted to their patrician patrons. When they were summoned by the government to defend Rome militarily, the plebeians withdrew from the Roman polity to a sacred mountain

⁴²³The following quotes and references all refer to the online English version of Lorey (2008):
<https://transversal.at/transversal/0808/lorey/en>.

outside the boundaries of Rome to avoid conscription into the army. Vaguely reminiscent of Scott's arguments about resistance against the Vietnam war as forming part of hidden acts of resistances, by leaving Rome, Lorey argues that the plebeians “fundamentally questioned the *imperium*, the consuls' authority of command, in other words the structure of public rulership in Rome”. With Rancière (1.2.2.), whose conceptualisation of 'politics proper' also directly references the historical case of the plebeians, the movement of a social group out of the Roman republic can be cast as a quintessential political moment in that the plebeians *became visible* to the Roman political leadership in the moment they *claimed a right to be granted equal citizenship*. The political leadership had to grant them equal political rights which led to the effective incorporation of a group that was previously discriminated into an expanded political community. Through the official recognition of the plebeians' cause, the Roman political system was unsettled, but the political system itself remained unchanged.

Lorey's interpretation of the plebeian's collective flight as constituting a radical challenge to the existing political order resembles Glissant's conceptualisation of marronage in several ways. For Glissant, marronage was by definition revolutionary in nature, a conception that differed from the case made by colonial historians who cast the phenomenon of marronage as not questioning the system of slavery *per se*, but as mere isolated and highly personalised acts of exceptions to the rule (see 2.1.1.). By according the plebeian movement the status of a 'secession' in the classical sense of the term, Lorey pushes the conceptual implications of the plebeians' withdrawal further. Significant about the plebeian's historic practice of fugitivity in Lorey's account is, moreover, that after forming a new temporary community at a safe distance from the political system they fled, they eventually returned to Rome to continue their struggle for a republican order in Rome.⁴²⁴

This 'self-constitution as political alliance' differs from the one-directional exodus performed by the Israelites out of ancient Egypt or Marcus Garvey's Back-to-Africa project, but also from the less concrete lines of flight out of the biopolitical system discussed in the overview at the onset of this chapter. In Lorey's account, the plebeian strategy of constituting or assembling, allowed them to gather strength and communal cohesiveness required to intervene in the existing political order more effectively. Instead of creating a new political order altogether, the plebeians thus exercised pressure on the majoritarian community to transform and become more inclusive. Lorey understands the plebeian's 'constituent power' as a form of self-empowerment, and in this vein points to the meanings of the Latin verb *constituo* referring to notions like 'situate', 'together', 'settle', 'decide', 'create' and 'determine'. In her summary of the theoretical implications of the

⁴²⁴ In a conventional sense, a republic is defined as a political system of governance without monarchic, aristocratic or oligarchical rule, at least not on an official level. The Roman Republic was the original precedent of republicanism. It was marked by a clear class structure that only allowed the elite to participate in government (Robertson 2002, 425).

plebeian struggle, Lorey argues:

“the plebeian constituent power, this capacity is thus instituted in several acts: first the withdrawal through departure, the exodus, then through the act of the oath and legislation, and finally through the creation of an office, the holders of which, the *tribuni plebis*, are to protect the plebs with the threat of the most severe punishment for their violation. With these acts the plebeians turned their meagre political capacity into such a potent power that they were armed for conflicts with the patricians”.

The central aspect of the plebeian strategy, the return to the very same political order which had structurally discriminated them, in order to fight against it with renewed capacities from within, resembles Glissant's conception of marronage as much as it diverts from it. Bearing in mind Glissant's depiction of slave revolts in *Le quatrième siècle*, as a process of 'rooting' within the society that is being revolted against (see 4.2.), Lorey's presentation of the plebeians temporary withdrawal, appears to be more akin to the role Glissant accords to slave revolts than to the kind of 'violent marronage' conceptualised in *Le discours antillais* (2.2.3.). In his essay *Delinking* (2007), Walter Dignolo has made a similar differentiation by opposing movements of 'emancipation' to 'liberation'. As Dignolo argues via the work of Enrique Dussel, the notion of emancipation is part of the European Enlightenment discourse and particularly present in liberal, Marxist and feminist discourse. “While 'emancipation' was used to argue for the 'freedom of a new social class, the bourgeoisie [...] 'liberation' provides a larger frame that includes the racialized class that the European bourgeoisie (directly or indirectly) colonized beyond Europe“ (455). For Dignolo, liberation thus 'subsumes emancipation' and that it questions the very 'logic of coloniality' whereas emancipation proposes changes within the system (455). In geopolitical terms, liberation is thus more closely tied to the actual struggles for anticolonial liberation fought in Africa, Asia and Latin American, where:

“Liberation referred to two different and interrelated struggles: the political and economic decolonization and the epistemological decolonization [...] Thus, 'liberation' emerged in the process of de-centering the universal emancipating claims in the projects grounded in the liberal and socialist traditions of the European enlightenment“ (454).

As Glissant emphasised in his fictional rendition of marronage, and in his explicit commentary on *Le quatrième siècle* (4.2.2.), his work was not invested in reproducing this kind of opposition or hierarchisation between different modes of resistance, and instead made the case of perceiving them as one. Without discarding the possibility of effecting change from within a particular political community, the central thrust of Glissant's marronage is, nevertheless, the exploration and establishment of a completely different political order, or what Dignolo calls liberation, an order that is based on an entirely different epistemological and ontological basis than the one from which it seceded. This is in contrast to the movements of flight discussed above, as it is in contrast to Lorey's observations that, historically, the plebeian exodus did not question the

fundamental pillars of Roman society, such as the male domination over the household or the institution of slavery. As a relatively higher ranked social group, the plebeians were thus mainly concerned with emancipation in the sense of an improvement of their social status.

Although a detailed comparison between the case of the plebeians in Rome and the Caribbean is not the issue here, what appears to be noteworthy is the *relative social position* from which the act of flight is performed. In that regard an important distinction has to be made between a struggle for an improvement in ones social standing, and an escape from what Neil Roberts has called the 'zone of nonbeing', to which black people were relegated through slavery, towards the assertion of a different conception of humankind. The latter is a stake when one abstracts from Glissant's marronage as part of an exploration of alternative political models. In other words, in Glissant's marronage both the call for a radically new political model and a new conception of humanity is inherent. Lorey's notion of temporary withdrawal is, in that sense, more closely aligned with a dialectic of recognition, whereas Glissant's marronage puts a greater emphasis on a movement into new imaginary territories, without this preference having to be understood in exclusivist terms. In the following, I will show that, at a later point, Lorey has pushed the political implications of her theorisation of collective movements of flight closer to Glissant's interest in marronage.

From Temporary Withdrawal Towards the Exodus of the Precarious

In her book *State of Insecurity* (2015), and particularly in the final chapter *Exodus and Constituting*, Lorey transfers the concept of withdrawal from the historical case of the plebeians to the contemporary political moment – thus performing a similar conceptual move as the one I am concerned with by referring to Glissant's politics as a form of marronage –, as a way of exploring the political potential of what she calls an 'exodus of the precarious'.⁴²⁵ Precarity, which in the broadest sense denotes 'vulnerability, destabilisation and endangerment' shared by all of humanity and non-humans, is always relational in that it exposes humans to other humans and makes them dependent on one another (2015, 10-12). Lorey emphasises that precarity is not the sole property of the “socio-geographical spaces of the periphery where it only affects others” (1), but that it also affects people living in the neoliberal Western industrial nations. For her, “neoliberal governing proceeds primarily through social insecurity, through regulating the minimum of assurance while simultaneously increasing instability” (2), a process that is particularly aggravated in instances where the welfare system has been, or is in the process of being, dismantled. By defining this as the background for her discussion, Lorey effectively limits the contexts she studies to states in which modern 'governmentality' (Foucault),⁴²⁶ has taken a more or less complete hold of their populations,

⁴²⁵ For the concept of precarity also see Judith Butler (2004).

⁴²⁶ With Foucault, Lorey understands modern governmentality to be based on the 'art of governing people', instead of objects or

and as a result brackets out a large part of humanity that is not, and arguably never was, governed by a biopolitical state, thereby risking maintaining a thoroughly Eurocentric framework for her study. The main question Lorey pursues in her most recent engagement with the political potential of practices of refusal asks how modes of resistance can be organised against a 'dispositive of power' that takes on the form of a 'dispositive of care', by which she means, "the intertwining of affective and cognitive labour, the privatization of prevention, anxiety about precariousness, and servile self-care" (96). Referring to the concept of the 'line of flight', which I have introduced above, she writes that:

"a line of flight out of the dispositive of care means moving away from the dominant model of being limited and threatened by others, and from preventive care focused on what is one's own, in the direction of *cuidadania*, a care community in which our relationality with others is not interrupted but is regarded as fundamental" (99).

This quote contains both an epistemological and a political argument by calling for a movement away from a belief in individual autonomy towards a communitarian relationality that is in line with the general thrust of what I described as the community-creating aspect of Glissant's *marronage* in chapter 4. Lorey further associates this movement with the creation of a 'care community' or *cuidadania*, as it was developed by the *Precarias a la deriva*, a feminist social centre in Madrid, that launched a general strike in June 2002 (*Precarias a la deriva*). The notion of *cuidadania* is a neologism referring both to the verb 'care' and to 'citizenship', thus evoking an alternative conception to the dominant understanding of a political community in which forms of caring for others are either bureaucratized in discriminatory ways through the nation-state as well as structurally gendered along a dominant male norm (Mennel et al. 2014, 29-30). *Cuidadania* is proposed as a counter-concept geared towards "overcoming the nation-state based conceptions of community and finding a way towards the ethical and political recognition of the fact that 'life is communal life and political life with others, and thereby open towards the power of our existence with others'"⁴²⁷ (31). In this scenario, and in contrast to her account of the historical exodus of the plebeians, it seems as if a return, in the sense of a re-integration into the existing political order, might be impossible. Lorey however asserts: "The point is that in the exodus of the many, a constituting, an organizing, of the manifold singularities emerges, in order to 'return' and fundamentally change the existing social relations" (102). Although Lorey thus holds on to the conviction that intervening into the conditions that were refused is a 'pivotal point' for the powers that constituted themselves through a momentary exodus (106), this 'return' takes the form of a

territories, and that it relies on cultivating among its subjects a kind of obedience that leads to individualisation and isolation as a necessary step towards becoming a fully modern independent subject (2015, 3).

⁴²⁷"einen Begriff, der – die nationalstaatlich grundierten Gemeinschaftskonzeptionen überwindend – einen Weg zur ethischen und politischen 'Anerkennung' des Umstands eröffnen könnte, 'dass das Leben gemeinschaftliches Leben ist, dass es politisches Leben mit anderen ist, und somit offen für die Potenz unserer Existenz mit den anderen'", my translation.

reform within rather than a revolution without a particular state. While the social relations have radically changed through the exodus of the precarious and the development of new forms of togetherness, Lorey thus insists on the possibility of a return to the given institutional framework. The reasoning being that, as Lorey points out, the 'fundamentally changed existing social relations' can be practiced both *within, underneath* and *above* the institutional level of the state. The kind of 'constituting' Lorey has in mind thus does not necessarily have to take the form of an institutionalised political community such as a state:

“it is understood at both the theoretical and the political level as a movement that distances itself from sovereignty and thus from the juridical. The precondition for the unfolding of this kind of constituent power is the common refusal or the common exodus, not to linger in negation or deconstructive questioning, but rather to be able to invent a re-composition“ (105).

Refusing the traditional political norm of sovereignty and a translation of political ideas into legal texts, the possibility of operating “*within, underneath* and *above*” the level of the state, are commonalities between Lorey's work and Glissant's conception of *marronage* that are worth highlighting. Political freedom for Lorey is not an individual practice but, “a question of joining with others, exchanging with others, acting together with others” (106).

As examples of the kind of 'constituting practices' she has in mind, Lorey cites the example of EuroMayDay movements that began in the early 2000s and were sparked by activists from Italy, Spain and France, as a constituent power of the 'precarious', by which she refers to people who “do short-term jobs, get by from project to project, and often fall through collective social-security systems,” or cultural workers, knowledge workers, unemployed, illegalised persons and trade unions (9). Underlying the particular formation of the EuroMayDay movements, which continue on an annual basis on May 1, is that the cause of the 'precarious' can no longer be represented by the traditional political left. Instead of appearing under the banner of a unified 'working class', the Multitude of the precarious are characterised by their differences, which as Lorey stresses, are not negated by the movement but protected as the basis for the production of 'alliances', by focussing on what the precarious have in common (109). In line with Glissant's approach, another central characteristic of the political practice of the multiplicity of the precarious is the refusal of conceptions of singular identities and representations, “as non-representationist practices which can be understood as a political 'form of formlessness' or a 'new form of democracy'” (109).

In her transition from the plebeians temporary withdrawal to contemporary movements of the precarious, Lorey's political proposition gains in radicality and, with the notion of *cuidadania*, also suggests to move into an epistemological direction by aiming to replace a liberal individualism with a more relational and communal way of being. From a Glissantian point of view, the question, however, remains whether the flight from precarity is substantially different from a *marronage*

performed against the historic background of enslavement. The struggle for liberation from structural dehumanisation is not a recent phenomenon (such as the demise of the welfare state to which several of Lorey's arguments allude), but one with a history of several hundred years in which geopolitical power dynamics between colonial centres and periphery and the ideology of racism have played central roles. In this historic context, 'care communities' functioning outside the neoliberal system of self-care, to which Lorey refers with reference to the *cuidadania*, are not a new phenomenon. They have been in existence for as long as the colonial project was invested in their very destruction. Glissant's marronage implies a departure from the plantation because it is both *literally* lethal for human beings, because it confines the conception of humans and non-humans to a Western norm. Another difference that can be identified between Glissant and Lorey – one that I have also mentioned with regards to the work of Hardt and Negri – is that, in contrast to established forms of political resistance, such as demonstrations or the formation of large-scale organisations, Glissant's politics of relation t mainly takes place in the arts. Its worldliness is not quantifiable according to size or geography – such as the social movements to which Lorey refers –, but is premised on paying attention to the political importance of the smallest as much as to the biggest differences (Diawara and Glissant 2011, 9).

In sum, my analysis of Lorey's work on the notions of withdrawal has highlighted a set of characteristics and particularities about Glissant's conceptualisation and practice of intellectual marronage. Instead of casting Lorey's concerns as fundamentally different to the ones harboured by Glissant my main claim centred around the importance of emphasising the different conceptual and historic backgrounds against which Lorey and Glissant developed their interest in movements away. By foregrounding epistemological and ontological concerns provoked by the dehumanisation of the plantation, the movement of marronage effectively challenges modes of exodus performed in response to experiences of precarity, by asking whether the alternatives they propose differ from the system they resist at a fundamental level or not. Instead of casting this relation as an opposition, the line of research pursued throughout this thesis suggests viewing this philosophical conjunction as a possible bridge between concerns around the notion of precarity and blackness as a political identity. By workingA from within the tradition of black liberation movements in the Americas, Neil Roberts' work on liberation (5.1.2.) and Fred Moten's work on black fugitivity (5.1.3.) promise to provide conceptualisations of marronage that are even more closely aligned with my description of Glissant's politics.

5.1.2. Neil Roberts' Theory of Liberation and the Goals of Glissant's Marronage

As I pointed out at the onset of this thesis, Neil Roberts' work is of particular importance for my work since his book *Freedom as Marronage* (2015) counts among the few cases where scholars have attempted to approach Glissant's work as political theory (see 1.3.3.). Roberts' study of Glissant is, furthermore, of specific interest for the concerns of this chapter because it seeks to bring Glissant's conception of marronage in conversation with debates in political theory around the notion of liberation and freedom. For Roberts, this work forms part of a larger project of 'creolising political theory', as stated in the epigraph to this section (147).⁴²⁸ Considering Glissant "one of the few Caribbean theorists whose *oeuvre* repeatedly calls for interrogating the creative dimensions of marronage beyond its historical associations" (12-13), Roberts' engagement with Glissant's marronage operates on similar conceptual terrain as the one upheld by this thesis. Apart from this commonality, there are further important intersections between Roberts' interest in the relevance of marronage for a philosophy of freedom and my own focus on the role marronage plays for Glissant's politics of relation. These overlaps might be surprising since Roberts' project on conceptions of freedom is in stark contrast with Glissant's silence on this very notion. In fact, Glissant only rarely mentions *liberté* and *libération* in his writings. Instead he placed greater emphasis on achieving individual and collective *balance* or *équilibre*. An important aspect in that regard is that Glissant's work in general is marked by a skepticism towards an official status of freedom or independence. The French domination of Martinique has led his work to explore the viability of more complex and overlapping forms of political association that can, to a certain degree, accommodate forms of dependence or 'unfreedom', as I have elaborated with reference to the work of Yarimar Bonilla and Glissant's own arguments pertaining the sovereignty of Martinique (4.1.2.). Notions like balance or *équilibre* thus privilege an interest on a cultural or social level, denoting specific forms of social 'health', 'cohesion' or 'sanity', over a focus on forms of official freedom or unfreedom. Balance is by definition unstable and premised on the ability to navigate complex set of factors. How an individual or a community arrives at such a balance is a central problem for the politics of relation. Throughout this sub-section I will explore how Roberts' theory of liberation can be reconciled with my conception of Glissant's politics of relation.

Referring back to the arguments made in the previous chapter about how Glissant's politics was invested in the creation of new communities, Roberts' proposition to conceptualise the type of marronage proposed by Glissant as 'sociogenic' (2.1.2.) supports my own thesis that the concept of marronage needs to be viewed as intricately connected to the necessity of creating new forms of community. Akin to my arguments concerning Glissant's usage of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of

⁴²⁸ I will return to a discussion of this notion in 6.4.

the rhizome, Roberts also refers to the rhizome as a way to destabilise the neat categories of historical marronage (*petit* and *grand*) as discussed in chapter 2.1.1. Instead of contributing to the tradition of scholarship invested in *taking different forms of marronage apart*, with the direct or indirect result of downplaying their historic and theoretical importance, Roberts proposes a historical lens that sees the “*concurrent* modalities of flight from slavery occurring in the world [...] each is a different scale of flight that can transpire in overlapping temporality. Epistemologically, flight spans former and future bodies of knowledge”(167-68). For Roberts, this is a way of acknowledging that “micro acts of flight [can] have macro-consequences for freedom“, a realisation that brings with it a call to 'chart in greater detail the experience of the enslaved' (49), as Roberts argues, and for which, in the course of my own study, an engagement with Glissant's fictional oeuvre has proven to be particularly apt.

Freedom as Flight

In *Freedom as Marronage*, Roberts charts the connection between micro and macro movements of marronage by developing a different theory of freedom which he labels 'freedom as flight'. This notion is in contrast to what he perceives to be a traditional bias in the discipline of political theory to think of freedom and unfreedom as 'inherently inert conditions' (8) belonging, in a classical sense, to slaves and non-slaves, or in the binary forms of 'negative' and 'positive liberties' (21), as developed in the works of Immanuel Kant and Isaiah Berlin.⁴²⁹ For Roberts, both of these conceptions omit the possibility of slave agency, whereas he considers marronage, – particularly in its 'sociogenic' form (2.1.2.) –, as “moments of flight that usher in new orders and refashion society's foundations“ (116). On that basis, Roberts proposes that marronage can offer a potentially different way of thinking about freedom as an ongoing process, as a continuous movement, and one that needs to be studied from the perspective of those subjected to slavery, as the ones suffering the most extreme form of human oppression, or non-freedom. Several postmodern and feminist theorists, most prominently influenced by the works of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, have argued against the notion that a clear break between freedom and unfreedom is possible. The view that the work of liberation is a never-ending process, but one requiring ongoing critical work is thus not a novel pronouncement in critical political theory. As I have argued with regards to the differences between Glissant and French postmodern theorists like Rancière and Nancy, Glissant's work towards a collective 'balance' however differs from the view that freedom or a 'good' political community has to remain intrinsically elusive or forever *à venir*. Roberts, with his model of a 'four-state-blueprint' of liberation in Glissant's work supports this claim.

⁴²⁹ The distinction proposed by Berlin perceives negative freedom to be a 'freedom from external constraint' and positive freedom as the possibility to realise one's full potential or a sense of fulfilment (Scruton 2007, 58).

Roberts' Four-Stage-Blueprint of Liberation

In his chapter devoted to Glissant's conception of marronage called *Marronage between Past and Future* Roberts conceptualises what he suggests to have been Glissant's 'four-state-blueprint' towards sociogenic marronage from a reading of *Le discours antillais* (1981). Furthermore drawing on a reading of Glissant's depiction of maroon characters and communities in his novel *Le quatrième siècle*, Roberts argues that Glissant was generally skeptical about the chances of success of both *petit* and *grand marronage* and that he considered the spaces created by these movements – the 'state', which Roberts associates with the plantation and the development paradigm, and the 'non-state', which Roberts refers to as 'zone of refuge' or 'shatter zones' – as spaces offering only limited freedoms (149). Following on from what he considers to be Glissant's rejection of these forms of flight in *Le quatrième siècle* – in contrast to my interpretation in 4.2.2. –, Roberts extrapolates 'four stages of freedom' out of several dispersed passages taken from *Le discours antillais* (155-63).

According to Roberts, the first stage consist of a practice geared towards re-writing history 'from below' against the colonisers History 'from above'. This is in line with what I have referred to in 2.2.1. as the creation of a counter-discourse. Roberts' second stage refers to the task of reconciling the impulses of *detour* and *retour* (3.3.), by which Roberts understands the impulse among a forcefully transplanted population to either return to a point of origin that is irretrievable, and doomed to fail, as in the case of the aforementioned Back-to-Africa project by Marcus Garvey, or the “desire to acquire freedom [...] in a place other than your transplanted homeland“ (2015, 157). The third stage consists for Roberts in the practice of liberatory forms of resistance, which Roberts considers Glissant to have conceptualised between two dimensions of resistance: a *horizontal* one expressed in forms like music, physical acts as well as violent or nonviolent forms of resistance, and a *vertical* one, denoting differences between overt or covert, conscious or unconscious forms of resistance (161-62). According to these two X- and Y-axis, any form of resistance can be placed according to their different degrees of visibility or intensity. Resistance can therefore, at times, take on the form of an economy of survival, (invisible and less intense) or an overt armed battle (visible and intense). This model is helpful in that it clarifies what I have shown in the previous chapters with regards to Glissant's conciliation between forms of resistance practiced by maroons and slaves. The fourth and final stage for Roberts is the concept of Antillanité, which Robert defines as an 'open-ended project of a Caribbean federation' proposed by Glissant in the last part of *Le discours antillais* (162). The fact that Glissant advocated for Antillanité on an institutional level is for Roberts an indication of his belief that “statecraft can construct a zone of refuge outside the hills” (163), a point I have also made in the previous chapter,

specifically in contrast to Nancy's notion of an essentially 'inoperative community'. This re-emphasises that Glissant's politics was not directed *against* the modern nation-state *per se*. Instead, while engaging with its institutions, it also attempted to carve out new political sphere *below*, *above* and *across* it. Although Roberts neither goes into detail as to how the project of a Caribbean political federation could be institutionally structured, nor how it could be politically achieved – Glissant himself remained vague on these questions – Roberts remarks that Glissant's repeated emphasis on the notions of '*pays*' and '*communauté*' when writing about Martinique or the Caribbean was markedly different from the promotion of an exclusivist nationalism in the way it is conventionally understood. Echoing some of my arguments about Glissant's work on communities in chapter 4, Roberts explains:

“*Pays* connotes the intersections of country, nation, state, and soil with the landscapes of a people [...] Revolutionary nationalism often produces slogans rife with the language of generalizing universality, chauvinism, and ethno-racial exclusions. *Pays*, the land, is the sum total of physical territories, spatial zones, diversity, collective expressions, and political strategies. No single person or place is sovereign over others“ (163).

While Roberts can be credited for identifying a clear line of argument running across the essentially archipelagic structure of *Le discours antillais*, the clear chronological and developmental progression or 'stages' he proposes appears to be in striking contradiction both to Glissant's aversion to fixed theories as well as to Roberts' own conceptualisation of 'sociogenic' marronage as an ongoing movement. The overall blueprint for liberation Roberts finds in Glissant's work is surprisingly one-directional: from enslavement to the establishment of a Caribbean consciousness that is reflected in an institutionalised political federation. While I concur that this general direction can indeed be discerned from a reading of *Le discours antillais*, one of my main claims in this thesis has been that broadening the textual and non-textual material, on whose basis Glissant's conception of marronage is studied, allows for a more specific and a broader understanding of Glissant's marronage. Working with a significantly larger textual basis, as I have done in this study, reveals that Glissant's marronage cannot be limited to the regional level of the Caribbean and to the notion of Antillanité. As pointed out at the onset of chapter 3, following the 1970s and 1980s, in which Glissant, strongly advocated for Caribbean unity to be institutionalised on a cultural and political level, the concept of Antillanité in fact altogether disappeared from Glissant's conceptual lexicon and was subsequently replaced by creolisation. The reasons for this shift can partly be attributed the fact that, as he pointed out in *Visite à Glissant* (2001), he did not believe in neither the practical prospects nor the political prioritisation of a political Caribbean federation anymore. Instead, and I pointed this out in chapter 3, Glissant's marronage was, from the onset, concerned with a movement towards the world. This movement not only took the physical form of a yearning to visit other

countries, but was mainly geared towards a change in the consciousness of one's own place in relation to the radical diversity of the world and institutionalised in concrete organisations like the *Institut martiniquais d'études*, the *Institut du Tout-Monde*, the *UNESCO Courier* and the *International Parliament of Writers*. As I argued throughout chapter 4, instead of a narrow focus on the prospects of establishing communities in the forms of states, Glissant's work on communities also (perhaps primarily) explored alternative forms of world-communities outside this dominant institutional framework.

A second difference between Roberts' approach and my own can be identified in the overall ambition of his work. Whereas Roberts claims that his book does not seek to present an alternative system of governance to liberal statecraft (2015, 25), I would argue that what Glissant's politics of relation essentially provokes the reader to do is to pursue this kind of imaginative work. In a review of *Freedom as Marronage* Jack Turner has formulated this point of view in the following terms:

“Will, in other words, some enterprising scholar someday write a work that merges the spirit of Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment* with Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* and re-synthesizes Atlantic political thought such that Douglass and Dessalines stand co-equally alongside Harrington and Rousseau? It may take another generation of research into the still under-studied area of Afro-modern political thought to prepare the ground for such a re-synthesis” (2017, 9).

Although, in my view, the creation of such a ground-laying work can neither be the achievement of a single 'enterprising scholar', nor should aim at 'uplifting' black authors to the ranks of the canon of Western political theory, taking Glissant's concept and practice of marronage seriously, in my view, points in the direction pointed out by Turner, namely the need to *create something new* once the movement outside of the existing parameters of political thought has been performed. As a concrete example of the direction such an inquiry could take, the ensuing sections address the question of what Glissant's intellectual marronage can contribute to the question of migration and borders (5.2., 5.3.) as well as that of decolonial forms democracy (5.4.).

In addition to the difference in the archival basis and the strategic outlook associated with an interest in Glissant's marronage, a third conceptual difference between my own and Roberts' work revolves around the concept of Relation. Whereas the overall framework of this thesis partly agrees with Roberts when he considers marronage to be at the centre of Glissant's work, and that his late writings “merely reflect a worldly extension of the singular concept underlying Glissant's work” (2015, 144),⁴³⁰ this agreement is only partial in an important sense. In contrast to Roberts, I have argued at the introduction of this thesis (1.4.1.), that, as a concept, marronage is not as central to Glissant's philosophy as Relation. For my approach the conceptual priority of relation over

⁴³⁰ This difference in readings might in part be attributed to what I would consider Roberts' conflation of the concepts of relation and creolisation (2015, 147, 166), whereas I treat them as different concepts (see 1.4.1.).

marronage means that although *the movement of marronage shapes his political practice, it only leads to the point where the work of relation begins*. This implies that, while I am interested in *what kind of marronage* Glissant's political work performs, this question is intimately tied to the question of what kind of communities emerge from his conception and practice of fugitivity.

While I do consider that the potential institutional-legal implications of his work require a heightened degree of attention by Glissant scholars, the preceding parts of this thesis have demonstrated that Glissant's performance of marronage takes place on several levels or in different modes, which I have referred to as fiction, life-writing, abstract political thought and organisational action. Although Roberts is well-aware of the different dimensions of Glissant's work, they risk being obfuscated in *Freedom of Marronage* by a privileging of a conventional understanding of 'theory' taking a teleologic form in Roberts' 'four-stages' of liberation over a consideration of Glissant work at large as having diverse or at times diverging and (seemingly) contradictory theoretical implications.

As pointed out at the onset of this study (1.4.3.), the epistemological move of seeking an 'outside of the inside-outside binary', which I will discuss with regards to the work of Fred Moten, is an integral part of Glissant's marronage that could add to Roberts' argument about marronage representing a specific kind of freedom that is *more than continuous movement*, namely also the possibility of exploring the liberatory potentials of statecraft, such as in Glissant's suggestion of Antillanité and a Caribbean political federation. In other words Glissant's practice of marronage does not halt at the moment where the escape from the plantation as been achieved but seeks to explore what it would mean to create new political communities based on a philosophy of relation. The three main directions this thesis has traced, can be thus be conceived as concurrent modes of marronage and political practice that extend beyond the teleological or evolutionary development implied by a fixed 'four-stage' movement to freedom.

In sum, Roberts' work on Glissant's theorisation of marronage is a productive ground on which the implications of my perception of Glissant's politics of relation can be further explored. The main insight I derived from setting my own approach in relation to Roberts' is that taking the different dimensions and expressions of Glissant's marronage seriously helps in deducting the full theoretical implications of his work. These implications go beyond the geographic limitations of the Caribbean and the celebration of a freedom attained by a never-ending *being on the move*, or the institutionalisation of a state project. As I have argued, this finding warrants to be supplemented by efforts to further study the institutional-legal set-ups of the political communities created in the process of marronage, as well as the philosophical implications of marronage as an epistemological movement out of the Western political imaginary (5.4.2.). Before further pursuing this line of

enquiry from the following section onwards, I will close the discussion on political theoretical notions related to Glissant's practice of intellectual marronage by presenting the work of Fred Moten on black fugitivity.

5.1.3. Fred Moten and Black Fugitivity

As Roberts' work repeatedly emphasises, there is an important difference between political movements of exodus, withdrawal and flight performed by enslaved and racialised persons in the Americas, that were systematically relegated to a non-human status, and movements of fugitivity operating on the basis of an inferior social status, but whose humanity was not denied. Put differently, if contemporary political systems are considered to be characterised by upholding the racialised structures of the plantation, movements against capitalism or patriarchy need to address the anti-black logic at the basis of this system to form part of the tradition of marronage.

This claim has most forcefully been made by adherents of Afro-pessimism who perceive the 'totality of anti-Blackness' of contemporary political systems to be axiomatic (Wilderson et al. 2017, 7). As a theoretical lens, Afro-pessimist thinkers proceed from the assumption that blackness is equivalent with the status of a slave, a definition taken from Orlando Patterson's theorisation of slavery as 'social death' (the slave) versus the 'social life' of the fully human (8). In line with the general argument I have posited about the continued relevance of the plantation for the analysis of structural violence in contemporary societies, Wilderson et al. write that “a Black person on the street today faces open vulnerability to violence just as the slave did on the plantation” (9). Developed against the background of experiences of police murder, mass incarceration and surveillance mechanisms directed against African Americans in the US, Afro-pessimism is intimately concerned with the study of how anti-black *social and lethal* violence is upheld. Black liberation, in this context is understood as “a negative dialectic, a politics of refusal, and a refusal to affirm; as an embrace of disorder and incoherence; and as an act of political apostasy”⁴³¹ (11). Due to his theorisation of this kind of 'refusal to affirm' in the context of the black radical tradition, the work of Fred Moten is of particular interest in my political theoretical discussion of abstractions of Glissant's marronage. Moten's work proceeds from a centering of the notions of blackness and black study as a way of countering anti-black structures. The poetic and seemingly improvised, highly coded manner, of Moten's writing practice entertains an ongoing conversation with Glissant's work in overt and covert ways.⁴³²

431 Apostasy is described as “the total abandonment of one's belief in a religion, party, or cause” (Wilderson et al. 2017, 11).

432 Moten's essay trilogy *consent not to be a single being* is named after a translation of Glissant's phrase *consent à n'être plus un seul*. Despite being influenced by Glissant, Moten asserts that he is invested in thinking beyond his concept of relation or “against the grain of relation and the individuation that relation seems unable not to bear” (2017, xv).

Refusing That Which Has Been Refused

The kind of fugitivity proposed by Moten is intimately linked with the figure of the runaway in an immediate historic sense as well as in a more abstract, metaphorical sense. It is most acutely expressed in the notion of 'refusing that which has been refused to you'. To make sense of this phrase it is important to note that Moten proceeds from an important conceptual distinction between blackness and the 'people who are called black', for example in the chapter *Erotics of Fugitivity* in *Stolen Life* (2018). Whereas black people have been historically dehumanised through a process of epidermalisation and objectification and subjected to criminalisation and genocidal violence, blackness is not tied to an essentialist understanding of race or pigmentation. Instead, it operates more on the level of consciousness or attitude, as becomes apparent in Moten's equation of blackness with 'black study' as “the undercommon, the underground monastic attitude of the quarters, the field, the refuge, the territory, the church, the joint, the (sound barrier) club” (243). In proposing this distinction between blackness and black people, Moten does not disavow that the 'people who are called black' have a special role to play in the maintenance of blackness because they “operate as a thoughtful sensuality, in the interplay of the refusal of what has been refused them and the consent to what has been imposed on them” (243). As the conceptual pendant to the physical and social violence inflicted on black people by the anti-black paradigm proposed by Afropessimists, Moten argues that the philosophical disavowal of blackness “constitutes the modern world as socioecological disaster”, which in turn means that “the preservation of blackness, which more and more is revealed to be tantamount to the preservation of Earth (in its paraontological totality)” (243). In the commitment to a preservation of the 'Earth' and its imaginary, Moten's blackness thus moves into the direction of how Glissant conceptualised the *Batouto* people who are characterised by their 'thoughtful sensuality' of the diversity of the world (4.3.).

As a key strategy of blackness, “to refuse what has been refused” is, for Moten, “a combination of disavowing, of not wanting, of withholding consent to be a subject and also of refusing the work, of withholding consent to do the work, that is supposed to bring the would-be subject online. It is to prefer not to” (243). Moten argues that this kind of black fugitivity is intimately connected to 'non-performance' as a radical non-corporation with dominant social conventions, such as contractual agreements between individuals (245). In a reading of Sora Han's essay *Slavery as Contract – Betty's Case and the Question of Freedom* (2015) Moten argues that the decision by a slave woman called Betty in 1857, who was declared free by the Supreme Court of Massachusetts in 1857, but preferred returning to slavery over being 'a contractual agent with free will', demonstrates the refusal to adhere to the expectations of modernity. As Moten points out, Betty's non-conformity expressed a 'brutally ironic' preference of the social life Betty had as a slave

over the 'social relation' she would have entered as a 'free contract worker' (255): “The social life that now we know as Betty is neither slave nor free but fugitive“ (264). Moten's line of thought about how 'freedom and slavery might be each other's condition of possibility' (253), reiterates some of the concerns I brought forward from a Glissantian angle against Neil Robert's privileging of notions of freedom over a more wholistic sense of socio-cultural balance. In response to Moten's arguments about Betty's non-performance another significant difference to the way I have conceptualised Glissantian marronage is the latter's explicitly collective nature, as opposed to Betty's individual decision. Although Moten is primarily concerned with larger cultural questions pertaining to style or the aesthetics of the radical black tradition, the fact that his work is not incompatible with collective dimension and the reflection of alternative modes of being together is apparent in the influential book *The Undercommons* (2013), which he co-wrote with Stefano Harney.

Other Modes of Being Together and Strategic Entanglement With the Plantation

In *The Undercommons* Moten and Harney employ “the refusal of the choices as offered“ as a precondition for a mode of “being together in homelessness” (Halberstam 2013, 15). In his foreword to the book, Jack Halberstam interprets Moten and Harney's proposition of an 'embrace of a state of dispossession' as forming part of the question “Can this being together in homelessness, this interplay of the refusal of what has been refused, this uncommon appositionality, be a place from which emerges [...] an improvisation that proceeds from somewhere on the other side of an unasked question?” (18). The question of how a sense of community can emerge from a collective practice of fugitivity, which also emerges from Glissant's work, is here forcefully posed. Important to note in this context is that, as in Glissant's work of fiction, Moten and Harney do not perceive of fugitivity towards a 'being together in homelessness' as a radical delinking from the plantation and its institutions, but as entailing the possibility for maintaining a 'strategic entanglement' with it.⁴³³ This kind of subversive strategy is, for example, explored in the context of the contemporary US-American university system. As Moten and Harney write, “it cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge”. In the same instance, they point out:

“it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment. In the face of these conditions one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can. To abuse its hospitality, to spite its mission, to join its refugee colony, its gypsy encampment, to be in but not of – this is the path of the subversive intellectual in the modern university” (33).

Deliberately exploring the metaphorical power of the maroon figure, they apply the notion

⁴³³Although Walter Mignolo's decolonial project of delinking (2007) and Glissant's intellectual marronage point into a similar direction, Glissant's politics is, in my view, and perhaps unsurprisingly so, more relational, creative and non-oppositional whereas Mignolo's decolonial delinking is more critical, categorical and oppositional in nature.

to a host of precarious positions that form a larger 'invisible' community of maroons:

“Maroon communities of composition teachers, mentorless graduate students, adjunct Marxist historians, out or queer management professors, state college ethnic studies departments, closed-down film programs, visa-expired Yemeni student newspaper editors, historically black college sociologists, and feminist engineers. And what will the university say of them? It will say they are unprofessional [...] The undercommons, its maroons, are always at war, always in hiding” (37).

This conceptualisation of black study and blackness as fugitivity clearly deviates from Afropessimist prioritisation of the anti-black struggle over movements of the precarious, who are discriminated based on class, country of origin or gender. It reasserts that blackness for Moten is both a strategy and an attitude, a common goal more than a point of departure.

Meta-Out or the Black Outdoors

This aspect can be re-emphasised by engaging with Moten's notion of a 'meta-out' or the 'black outdoors'. In conversation with Saidiya Hartman, Fred Moten has referred to this 'meta-out' as 'the outside of the outside' or the 'outside of the inside/outside opposition: “when I think of the outdoors, the black outside, I think of it as this thing which is to be out from the outside. Or what are the conditions that would make such a thought possible and also necessary, so a meta out; an ec ec; extra ecclesiastical” (2018).⁴³⁴ While Moten suggests that this meta-outside is linked to a constant activity of running away, where an actual escape can never be achieved the notion of moving outside the dichotomy of the inside/outside of the slave ship or the plantation also brings Moten closer to my perception of Glissant's marronage: Firstly, in the sense that Glissant was invested in bridging several of the dichotomies upheld by colonialism, and secondly in the sense of moving towards a higher ground, for which Glissant suggested the notion of the Tout-Monde as point of reference. In that regard, Moten's black outdoors are not to be unlike the hill on which Papa Longoué and Mathieu Béluse have the conversation in *Le quatrième siècle* (2.2.2.). This meta-out allows one to see the larger structures and historical forces shaping the power dynamics of today, instead of comfortably falling into the position one has inherited and to defend it as irrevocably 'good'. Once these borders are overcome, it becomes possible to make out new horizons, to invent new political practices. In *Le quatrième siècle* this 'elsewhere' is the existence of other islands as well as the 'land before', which is both a historical and geographic reality as it is a political archive that can be harnessed.

In sum, Moten's conceptualisation of black fugitivity is a particularly fitting lens through which key characteristics of Glissant's political practice become visible. An important difference between the two is, however, that whereas Moten's conceptualisation of blackness is largely

⁴³⁴The following references refer to the online version of the interview: <https://chimurengachronic.co.za/to-refuse-that-which-has-been-refused-to-you-2/>.

formulated in response to anti-black violence, Glissant's work, for example via his depiction of the Batouto people, points towards an alternative philosophic archive, such as when he spoke about Africa's 'vocation as a foundational Unity that transforms itself into a Diversity' (Diawara and Glissant 2011, 5). Put differently, for Glissant the cultural African heritage and the experience of creolisation infuse a relational imaginary that can be compared to Moten's notion of black study or blackness. As I pointed out at the beginning of this study, Glissant was averse to employing established 'generalising' notions such as black and white in their French variants. Instead, he worked towards creating alternative terms that could shed the loaded colonial racial baggage. Glissant's aversion to consider anti-black racism as a totality, as proposed by Afropessimists, or to proceed from the experience of racism for the elaboration of his politics, does however not prevent his conception and practice of marronage to take the dehumanising force of the plantation system seriously. Moten's line of flight from black non-being towards blackness as the basis of new forms of togetherness can, in this regard, be likened to the line of flight Glissant traced from the adherence to a Western notion of Being towards culturally relativist notion of *étant*, which served him as the basis for his conceptualisation of new world-communities.

Moten's arguments about the distinction between black people and blackness, also highlight the fact that most of the personalities Glissant wrote about as belonging to his world-communities were 'called black'. He did, however, not develop a concept of collective or transnational black identity around what Moten calls the violent experience of 'epidermalisation'. While Glissant, like Moten, acknowledged that black people are particularly prone to develop a relational consciousness (what Moten calls a 'thoughtful sensuality') due to the violence they have been subjected to by the colonial project, Glissant was more invested in spelling out a kind of black cosmopolitanism that could also include 'people who are not called black', such as poets and artists who share a sensibility to 'see the invisible', and which he included in his anthology of the *Tout-Monde*, among which I have mentioned the works of Albrecht Dürer and William Faulkner as examples (4.3.2.). Glissant's insistence on the necessity to develop a relational imaginary (or a meta-out of the inside/outside binary) thus effectively privileged an epistemological over an ontological approach by insisting on the relevance of alternative ways of knowing outside the Western paradigm of rationality. Glissant's anti-racism is in this sense best captured by the afore-cited phrase that the 'racist is the one who refuses what he does not understand' (1.4.1.), against which Glissant maintained the right to opacity and the right to 'consent to not be a singular being'. Although Moten is not as interested in institutional political questions pertaining to sovereignty or state craft as Roberts, the general thrust of Moten's black fugitivity is closely aligned with the main characteristics of Glissant's politics of relation, as I have mapped them through the lens of intellectual marronage throughout my thesis.

Section Summary

This section demonstrated how Glissant's conception and intellectual practice of marronage does not operate in a vacuum in field of political studies, but encounters a host of concepts that appear to be remotely and more closely related to it. Through the engagement with a variety of notions, the general thrust of Glissant's marronage has become more apparent. Of particular importance throughout the discussions was the specificity of a practice of fugitivity performed against the historic background of slavery and the urgency of creating alternative communities out of the social void produced by the plantation system. With regards to several notions of flight that have been developed in response to the biopolitical state in the West I argued that, on an abstract political level, Glissant's marronage is both more *concrete* and *radical* in the kind of flight it advocates, as much as it is *less categorical*, in the sense of not privileging any particular mode of resistance, and as being invested in *more than one level of the political action*, meaning that it aims at changing the imaginary as much as it is interested in institutional transformations. Through an engagement with works that are more closely attuned to the general direction of Glissant's marronage, as a flight from the (dehumanising) plantation to the whole-world and an alternative conception of being, the works of Roberts and Moten have pointed into two directions that warrant to be further explored. Whereas Moten's arguments about blackness and fugitivity provoke further questions pertaining to how Glissant's work relates to the tension between particularity and universalism, blackness and cosmopolitanism, an aspect I will take up in chapter 6.3. Roberts' work, on the other hand, provokes a deeper interest in the institutional dimension of Glissant's political thought. The ensuing sections lend further support to this line of inquiry by elaborating on the concrete characteristics of Glissantian communities, pertaining to their external and internal set-ups by engaging with questions around border regimes (5.2., 5.3.) and democracy (5.4.).

5.2. Glissant's Border Thought and Movements of Migration

“*la Relation est la frontière fondamentale, qui est le passage ouvert*”⁴³⁵

– Édouard Glissant, *Une nouvelle région du monde* (UNRDM 97)

The preceding section has identified several theoretical overlaps between Glissant's intellectual marronage and established concepts in political studies around the notions of exodus, lines of flight and fugitivity. These conjunctions encouraged me to venture further out from my main concern in this thesis, of *distilling* the key characteristics of politics of relation from Glissant's oeuvre as a whole, towards taking up the task of actively *imagining* concrete pathways this kind of political practice could take if one abstracts from it by moving beyond the boundaries of Glissant's own texts and practices. This suggests working with Glissant's marronage in a more abstract sense that explores its possible relevance and implications in a set of political theoretical discussions. In this section, I will begin this work by setting Glissant's political thought in relation to the contemporary issue around the complex of borders and migration. As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, the material that I am going to consult in this process is constituted, by and large, by the findings of the previous three chapters. Where I deem it helpful, I supplement this understanding of marronage by referencing Glissant's explicit commentary on borders and migration. The discussion in this section is divided in two sub-sections. In the first sub-section (5.2.1.) I present the conceptual contours of Glissant's philosophical perspective on borders and present what I consider to be its philosophical and historic background. A second step (5.2.2.) will tie these abstract considerations more directly to the contemporary issue of migration as it has become a central global political topic in recent years.

To clarify the role this inquiry in relation to the previous section, I want to caution against misreading Glissant's border thought as neatly equating movements of marronage with migration, a line of reading the discussion preceding this section might imply. Several scholars⁴³⁶ have pointed out the potential productivity of setting these two phenomena in relation with one another by drawing on the analogy of marronage in the context of contemporary migration movements. While the intricate connections of racial capitalism with the asylum-migration nexus,⁴³⁷ and similarities in the surveillance methods used to manage slave plantations and the movements of migrants invites casting migrants as 'modern maroons', I consider propositions such as Neil Roberts' argument that

435“Relation is the fundamental border, the open passage”, my translation.

436 See for example Dénètem Touam Bona's *Heroic Land* (2016b), set in the refugee camp of the 'Jungle of Calais' in the year 2020.

In a philosophic dialogue a 'sitting man' and a 'running man' have a conversation about the rationality behind these two seemingly opposed ways of being or moving.

437 See also Tryon P. Woods and Khalil Saucier (2014).

migrants are maroons 'fleeing regimes of unfreedom' towards places where 'the act of becoming can expand' (2015, 170), problematic from a Glissantian perspective for a number of reasons. For one, Roberts' metaphorical equation of maroons with migrants can be critiqued for its generalisation as well as for its exclusive economic bias. In terms of the former, Ina Kerner points out in her reading of Ramón Grosfoguel that, from a postcolonial perspective, one would have to differentiate between, on the one hand, white 'immigrants', who do not struggle to integrate economically in their country of arrival, and on the other hand 'colonial/racial subjects of empire' and 'colonial immigrants' who do not escape the 'coloniality of power' by crossing national boundaries (Kerner 2019, 205-06), thus not only troubling assertions about migrants *in general*, but also Roberts' optimism with regards to the 'safety zones' of Europe and the US as distinct from the 'zones of non-being' in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

Another aspect to consider in this context is that, while South-North movements of migration are often triggered by armed conflicts and economic degradation, a Glissantian perspective also entails viewing migration, in part, as a culturally ingrained movement, that is as an end in itself. Glissant's conception of migration, in this respect, places a substantial emphasis on the human desire to be on the move, a desire which remains opaque in the final instance, and one that needs to be considered just as much as rational considerations geared towards improving one's life conditions. In this regard, Patrick Chamoiseau, for instance, writes about human beings as '*sapiens Africain*' who were, historically, not born in a 'maze of borders' but in 'open ecosystems', and 'knew only the differences between places and rhythms' (2017, 76). Glissant has expressed this belief in *Philosophie de la Relation* where he wrote of the innate desire to cross borders and explore new landscapes as an integral part of Relation (PHR 59-60). In the context of this thesis, movement for Glissant is intrinsically tied to a movement towards the world, a desire to be in relation with the world, and only on a secondary plane the result of economic or political deprivation (chapter 3).

From the perspective I endorse in this study, I therefore suggest a more *specific application* of the maroon concept to the issue of migration suggests itself, which will become more apparent in the ensuing sections. As a first indication of the themes that will become important in that regard, I will claim that this marronage takes place out of a global anti-black system that has no set geographic coordinates with the ultimate aim of changing the imagination of the world: from an adherence to the belief in 'the One' to an embrace of multiplicity. Perceived as a movement that carries the idea of multiplicity into the world, *migration as marronage* creates new communities instead of merely merging or integrating into the already established political communities. Scholarship on how forms of black transnationalism have been fostered throughout the 20th century as a result of physical and intellectual exchanges, as part of what Brent Hayes Edwards calls the

Practice of Diaspora (2003), or through the invention of new forms of political communities in refugee camps has revealed how new kinds of communities and identities are forged among migrant communities that have been considered as foreshadowing the political systems of the future (Agier 2016). In what ways Glissant's politics of relation can contribute to an imagination of the forms this political system could take will be the subject of the exploration in the succeeding sections.

A last aspect I want to note, before proceeding with the main analytical work of this section, is that, instead of neatly *equating* migrants with maroons, the work of Patrick Chamoiseau suggests a way to *relate* these two movements in more historical and imaginative fashion. In his book *Frères migrants* (2017), to which I will turn more extensively below (5.2.2.), he makes the case that a person who is left to die in an attempt to cross the Mediterranean can be seen in the context of a longer history and imagination that makes this human catastrophe possible. Reminding his readers that, in philosophic terms, slavery prospered at the level of a collective consciousness nourished by the Enlightenment tradition, thus a more general imaginary of what it means to be human and non-human based on the exclusive capacity to reason (127), for Chamoiseau, the borders upheld by the European border regime refer back to an imaginary that is not altogether different, thereby linking these two crimes against humanity by establishing an abyss connecting the African continent 'at the bottom of the Atlantic' – alluding to the millions of slaves who have died on the middle passage –, with the Mediterranean (21-23). Migration, in this view, is not the same as marronage. And modern migrants are not slaves. Rather, the history of slavery and the racist imaginary at its basis can be seen as having indirect repercussions for the way border regimes function in contemporary times.

Bearing these aspects in mind, as informing the general framework of the following discussion, the ensuing sub-section will proceed with a theorisation of the kind of 'border thinking' that emerges from Glissant's work.

5.2.1. From Walls to Points of Passage – Glissant's New Border Thought

Glissant's political practice displays a central interest in movements across borders, both on a theoretical and personal level. As I have specified with regards to his personal practice of political marronage and his theorisation of the need to reconcile *retour* and *detour* (3.3.), and some of its most overt proximities to the movements of exodus in the previous section, Glissant did not perceive individual human beings and collectives to remain static – neither in their ways of being (or rather becoming), and the identities they foster for themselves, nor in the physical and imaginary locations they frequent. Glissant's disposition to cross borders concerned, not only the legal ones separating modern states, but ranged all the way from the divisions between civilisations and cultures, humans, animals and plants, to those that differentiate literary genres, and 'standard' or

'written' from creole and oral languages (4.2.2.).⁴³⁸ While his treatment of these borders proceeds from an assumption of permeability and exchanges across them, how this view translates into a more concrete conceptualisation of borders and movements remains to be studied, a task I will pursue in the following.

This sub-section explores the question of what Glissant's philosophy of relation, and the fictional and non-fictional work ensuing from it, has to offer in an attempt to engage theoretically and practically with the issue around contemporary border regimes, which has become an urgent global political issue in recent years.⁴³⁹ By taking up this line of enquiry, this sub-section seeks to contribute to the growing body of postcolonial criticism of border regimes and specifically what Achille Mbembe has proposed as a larger archive of African imaginations of borderlessness and citizenship. As outlined at the onset of this chapter, this kind of work entails an act of translation of Glissant's personal political practice into more abstract conceptualisations, and thus forms part of my own interpretation of Glissant's insistence that a politics of relation cannot be deducted from any of his writings per se, but that it remains to be imagined (UNRDM 84-85). I begin this work with a brief overview of postcolonial approaches to the issue of migration before turning to the philosophical and historic basis on which Glissant developed his approach to migration and borders.

Postcolonial Perspectives on Migration and Borders

The dominant discourse around borders in Western media, as well as in the academic mainstream of migration studies, predominantly focusses on pragmatic socio-economic considerations and legal arguments about the feasibility and moral merits of relatively open or closed borders within the existing neoliberal economic system and the political framework of nation-states and human rights (Celikates 2016). Whereas the case for relatively 'open borders' relies on the claims that states have a responsibility towards redistributive justice, the case for 'closed borders' refers to the view that sovereign states deal with matters of global justice primarily through the channels of development aid. National autonomy and sovereignty are, in this tradition, interpreted as the 'right to exclude', and the right defend 'national interests' and the protection of a populations 'standard of living'. These conservative positions have been criticised as being incompatible with a commitment to Human Rights and basic liberal values like justice, freedom and democracy. Since no one gets to choose in which part of the world she is born, the case for (relatively) open borders appears logical on basic humanist grounds.⁴⁴⁰

438A 'border reading' of Glissant's work could take Sylvia Wynter's 1989 essay *Beyond the Word of Man* as point of departure. Wynter identified Glissant's personal experience of the border and the blockade as the basis of Glissant's poetic and literary oeuvre, arguing that "the existential ground from which the root metaphor that is central to Glissant's oeuvre [emerges] is that of blocking" (1989, 637-38).

439Its 'newness' can be debated since the discourse of crisis and urgency around it has, for the most part, been framed from a point of view of the Global North.

440For the defence of either of these positions refer to Miller (2009) and Thomas Nagel (2005).

A postcolonial approach differs from this debate, which mainly deals with migration as a problem to be addressed from a national perspective. A postcolonial perspective would aim at decentering this perspective by insisting on “a pluritopic perspective: On strategies of knowing and interpreting the world from multiple locations, drawing on multiple traditions of thought and critical inquiry. It would also reflect on why certain ways of knowing and interpreting the world have marginalized and displaced others” (Bartels et al 2019, 1). In addition to this radical extension of the geographic and epistemological dimension, a postcolonial approach would also take the dimension of global power dynamics over a longer temporal dimension seriously by paying attention to the: “intimate entanglement of colonialism with the emergence of capitalism as a globally dominant mode of relation, both among humans, and between humans and non-human animals, lifeforms and things” (Bartels et al 2019, 1).

In addition to employing a longer historical perspective that takes the multidirectionality of migration flows into account, what becomes visible from a postcolonial angle is how European global expansionism can, to a large extent, be held responsible for the 'push and pull' factors behind contemporary movements of migration. As Ina Kerner points out by citing the works of Ramon Grosfoguel and Stuart Hall, the effects of European colonialism cannot only be traced in the political structures (borders) and material inequalities it left behind, but also in the affective relations between the former metropole and colonies through the export of its culture (2019, 205-06). Apart from this productive critical or analytical dimension which postcolonial perspectives on migration entail, Kerner also identifies a set of propositions for a changed approach towards migration made in the work of postcolonial scholar Paul Gilroy.⁴⁴¹

In *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (2004) Gilroy suggests the notion of conviviality as an alternative to the paradigm of multiculturalism, which has been frequently dismissed as problematically invested in racial essentialisms. Emanating above all from postcolonial metropolises, Gilroy perceives conviviality as a mode of transitioning from closed identities towards unpredictable forms of identification through cross-cultural exchanges. Referring to the work of 'postcolonial culture building', Gilroy moreover presents a set of concrete suggestions as to how this postcolonial culture could be created on a national scale. His propositions include an active national debate on racism, a critical engagement with the colonial entanglements of the liberal tradition, a provincialising of Europe's understanding of self in the world and the recognition of the centrality of black culture for European culture (Kerner 2019, 213). The concrete nature of Gilroy's proposed political framework is particularly appealing in response to the frequent charge levelled against postcolonial studies of remaining on the level of discourse and criticism dealing

⁴⁴¹The propositions Kerner identifies in the work of Achille Mbembe alongside the work of Paul Gilroy will be taken up further below and in 5.4.2.

with the past. The 'convivial humanism' Gilroy calls for, also shares central concerns with Glissant's views on creolisation and cross-cultural relation. If one explores the differences between Gilroy's conviviality and Glissant's creolisation, one could begin by pointing out the different connotations of each term. Whereas conviviality refers to 'living together', 'coexistence' or even 'living side by side', Glissant's creolisation puts a stronger emphasis on merging, mixing and transforming. Instead of taking 'big' cultural differences as a given or unit of analysis ('ethnic', religious), creolisation evokes above all exchanges on the level of the imaginary and the shift from a belief in a singular world-view towards one marked by multiplicity. Additionally, in its broader understanding, creolisation implies a bold global-historic perspective of a creolising world, and the normative dimension of 'changing by exchanging' which is absent from conviviality's focus on empiric cross-cultural interactions. While noting these different points of emphasis, it is important not to overemphasise them as a way of creating an opposition between them which does not exist.

A second, significantly less concrete, argument about migration presented by Kerner is Mbembe's proposition of a '*pensée monde*' (world thought) as a response to the issue of migration. This world thought, which Mbembe loosely associates with Glissant's '*relation mondiale*' (2016, 177) and *Tout-Monde* (2015, 258), features prominently towards the end of several of his books and as a way out of the 'desire for apartheid' which Mbembe generally attests European cultures. By looking more closely at the African tradition, which Kerner identifies as informing the basis of Mbembe's world-thought, I will make the case that Mbembe's conceptualisation of the African tradition offers a productive entry point into Glissant's border thought. Via an exploration of its main characteristics it will become possible to demonstrate where Glissant's thinking on borders overlaps with and expands some of the key characteristics of postcolonial perspectives on borders.

Open Borders and the African Model of a Borderless World

In his Tanner Lectures series on Human Values, Achille Mbembe (2018) formulated a critique against scholarship advocating for 'open borders'. Mbembe's argument against its argument that only the complete abolition of borders and border controls will allow the international state system to no longer perceive migration as a problem but as a 'natural' practice (Anderson, Sharma and Wright 2009), proceeds by pointing out that the contemporary system of borders need to be seen as part of a larger Western tradition with material and imaginary dimensions. Claiming that "the Western archive does not help us to develop an idea of borderlessness", because it is, in itself, premised on the 'crystallisation of the idea of the border', Mbembe alludes to the paradigm of Human Rights, on which the no border advocates rely, as essentially reproducing the figure of the autonomous individual, which is in itself wrapped in a legal border.⁴⁴² This kind of crystallisation of

⁴⁴²The following quotes and references refer to video version of Mbembe's second Tanner lecture, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKm6HPCSXDY>.

the figure of the isolated or autonomous individual has already featured in the previous chapter on communities (4.1.1.). For Mbembe, who builds significant parts of his arguments on Hagar Kotef's book *Movement and the Ordering of Freedom* (2015), classical liberal political theories building on the theories of Immanuel Kant and Thomas Hobbes are caught in a contradiction when they advocate for movement as a manifestation of freedom while, simultaneously, considering 'unmanaged' forms of movement as a threat to order, stability and security, which are all key elements of nation-states' territorial sovereignty. In contrast to the Western tradition, or what Mbembe refers to as the 'Euroliberal tradition', he claims that the 'African model' might provide the conceptual tools to imagine a borderless world – not in the sense of an abolishment of the very notion of the border, but in the sense of borders operating as points of passage. Pointing out that precolonial Africa was not a 'borderless world', in the sense of an absence of any geographical delimitation of political authority, but that borders in this context were marked by their porous and permeable nature, Mbembe claims: “The business of a border is, in fact, to be crossed. That is what borders are for. There is no border conceivable border outside of that principle, the law of permeability“. Circulation and mobility are of fundamental importance for the development of political, economic, social and religious forms in this cultural context. This also has direct implications for how sovereignty is conceived. Instead of being expressed through the control of a territory with fixed borders, dominance in this context is expressed through networks, as Mbembe points out with reference to the importance of the prominent position of networks and crossroads in canonical works of African literature:

“What mattered the most was the distribution of movement between places [...]. Movement itself was not necessarily akin to displacement. What mattered the most was the extent to which flows and their intensities intersected and interacted with other flows, the new forms they could take when they intensified. So movement, especially among the Dogon, could lead to diversions, conversions and intersections. These were more important than points, lines and surfaces – which are as we know cardinal references in Western geometrics. [...] If we want to harness alternative resources, conceptual vocabulary type, to imagine a borderless world, here is an archive“.

In the preface to this thesis, I have interpreted this theorisation of borders and movements as implying a particular cartographic model that I consider to be constitutive for the way Glissant wrote several of his books, as much as for his philosophy of relation more generally. In claiming that Glissant's border thought shares many of the characteristics of Mbembe's African model, I do not intend on entering the complex debate about the syncretic origins of Glissant's philosophy, or Caribbean world-views more broadly, by isolating its 'African' strand as being of outstanding significance (2.1.3.).⁴⁴³ Instead of subsuming Glissant's ideas under the African archive, Mbembe's

⁴⁴³Of course, the term 'African' refers in itself to a large variety of world-views, among which Mbembe assumes a commonality that could in itself be scrutinised.

work is compelling in so far as it points to larger traditions of thought sharing important characteristics of Glissant's border thought. In the ensuing depiction of his border thought, I will demonstrate how the main lines of his conceptualisations overlap with those proposed by Mbembe's African model.

Formal Considerations Shaping Glissant's Border Thought

The material forming the basis of this study is predominantly made up of a selection of texts published in the last decade of Glissant's life that explicitly deal with the issues of borders and migration. The notion of his new thought of borders first appeared in his book-long essay *Une nouvelle région du monde* (2006), and was included in *Quand les murs tombent* (2007) and *L'introuvable beauté du monde* (2009), an open letter to Barack Obama on the occasion of his electoral victory in 2008 co-written with Chamoiseau. In *Philosophie de la Relation* (2009) the new border thought is granted the status of an individual 'thought', alongside Glissant's more established concepts such as relation, errantry and opacity. Patrick Chamoiseau's essay *Frères migrants* (2017) written in response to the 'European refugee crisis', occupies a central place among these texts, in that it contains a direct application of Glissant's theory to the subject of the following section.

In Glissant's book *Philosophie de la Relation*, the 'new border thought' (*nouvelle pensée de la frontière*) is presented as one of several short chapters that together make up something of a conceptual lexicon of Glissant's thought (PHR 25). His new border thought is listed as the third *pensée* followed by the concepts of errantry, creolisation, the invisible, opacity, Relation and the trace. As with most Glissantian concepts, anyone looking for a concise theorisation of what he is referring to as his 'new border thought' will be disappointed by reading his last book of essays. The *Philosophie de la Relation* does not contain a concise description but rather a set of poetic anecdotes and approximations. In order to get a sense of the general direction and contours of his thought on borders, as with the political strategies discussed in the previous chapters, his work needs to be read relationally, across literary genres and the separations between activism and writing. This will allow for a connection of a set of dispersed stories, approximations, comments and poetic imagery that all in some form relate to the question of borders and movements across them. In its most overt, and perhaps minimalist, formulations, Glissant's border thought calls for a transformation of legal borders operating as walls that keep out and protect against the perceived danger of a racialised other, into permeable structures that differentiate and allow for, or rather invite, the creation of relations. Borders, in this view, no longer separate between fixed entities but between more fluid phenomena. In what comes closest to a definition of his 'border thought' Glissant writes in *Philosophie de la Relation*:

“La pensée nouvelle des frontières: comme étant désormais l'inattendu qui distingue entre des réalités

*pour mieux les relier, et non plus cet impossible qui départageait entre des interdits pour mieux les renforcer. L'idée de la frontière nous aide désormais à soutenir et apprécier la saveur des différents quand ils s'apposent les uns aux autres. Passer la frontière, ce serait relier librement une vivacité du réel à une autre*⁴⁴⁴ (PHR 57).

As becomes apparent in this quote, borders remain necessary for Glissant because of what he perceived to be the importance of 'highlighting and contrasting between different landscapes', and different ways of living – a protection of diversity that is opposed to the homogenising project of neoliberal globalisation (UNRDM 22). On the level of the individual, personal borders are not only necessary for a sense of psychological stability, the violation of boundaries may also lead to disastrous outcomes, that more often than not benefit the stronger and not the weaker.⁴⁴⁵ However, as Glissant repeatedly asserted in one of his central 'mantras': “*Il n'est frontière qu'on n'outrepasse*” (There is no border that cannot be crossed) (QLMT 4). The desire to keep moving and to cross borders is an essential human trait from his perspective. It is therefore not only categorically impossible, but also a violation of a natural human principles to construct borders as impermeable straight lines that demarcate 'smooth surfaces'.

When he pointed out that the “*Les humanités d'aujourd'hui ne prennent pas la dimension de ces géographies et nous imaginons plus volontiers être bornés par des frontières qui vont dans l'incommensurable*”⁴⁴⁶ (UNRDM 25) he referred both to the fact of increasingly interconnected channels of transportation and information, and to what he considered the global awareness of this interconnectedness, which is for him a principal element of the age of the Tout-Monde (1.4.1.). At the same moment where the borders that used to separate the world 'humanities' become more permeable they also take on new forms, according to Glissant, who wrote with Chamoiseau that, “*Les murs qui se construisent aujourd'hui (au prétexte de terrorisme, d'immigration sauvage au de dieu préférable) ne se dressent pas entre des civilisations, des cultures, ou des identités, mais entre des pauvretés et des surabondances, des ivresses opulents mais inquiètes et des asphyxies sèches*”⁴⁴⁷ (QLMT 11-12). Considering the importance Glissant accorded to the borders 'between poverty and overabundance' underlines that, for Glissant, atavistic nationalisms and racisms did not lose any of the violence with which they shaped the catastrophes of the previous centuries onwards.

Drawing parallels with the plantation system, and thereby indirectly with the movement of

444 “The new border thought: that which, from now on, is the unforeseen that distinguishes between realities in order to better relate them, and no longer the impossible that decides between that which is forbidden to better re-enforce it. The idea of the border helps us to support and appreciate the taste of differences, when they are attached to one another. Crossing a border would be to freely relink one liveliness of the real to another”, my translation.

445 For a philosophic elaboration of the necessity of borders see Régis Debray's *Éloge de frontières* (2010).

446 “The humanities of today do not take the form of these geographies and we can now more readily imagine being bound by borders that reach into the endless”, my translation.

447 “The walls that are being erected today (on the pretext of terrorism, wild immigration or godly preferences) are not standing between civilisations, cultures or identities but between poverties and overabundances, between opulent yet anxious intoxications and dry paralysis”, my translation.

marronage, Glissant argued that, in the management of migration flows, new social walls are being erected which separate 'skilled' from 'unskilled' immigrants, with the former assuming a social status comparable to 'house slaves' (UNRDM 206). Specifically addressing the French national context, Glissant identified the colonial paradigm of assimilation as underlying contemporary efforts of 'integrating' migrants into the French nation (UNRDM 169). In a rough categorisation of Western policy approaches to migration, he associated the French migration politics as a 'politics of absorption, genius of assimilation, politics of integration'. He contrasted this approach to the one pursued by Great Britain's 'politics of the communautaire', and the immigration regimes of Germany, Netherlands and the US, which he generically referred to as a politics of 'improvisation' (UNRDM 84). This categorisation of border regimes is less intriguing for the precision of its proposed analytical divisions, which could easily be refuted by closer scrutiny, but for the general case which Glissant tried to make. Namely that none of these countries have developed what he considers to be a politics of relation, which would for him be the only way of actually 'integrating' immigrants (UNRDM 172).

Conceptually comparing borders that 'separate brothers and cousins', borders that 'brag about minor differences', borders that 'separate neighbouring villages,' borders that are 'installed by invading forces and cut through houses and gardens', from Glissant's perspective, 'borders that turn back immigrants' are the most unjust of all (PHR 58-59). In order to work against the global injustice perpetrated in the name of these borders, Glissant argued that what was needed was a shift in the imagination. This point is important to re-emphasise in so far as his line of argument was less concerned with addressing the specific and manifold 'symptoms' produced by contemporary border regime, but with a rethinking of the imaginary operating at its basis or root cause. Speaking in metaphorical terms borrowed from the medical field, Glissant's approach to the solution of political problems is in this sense a holistic one, and one that proceeds from an identification of the root causes or 'curses' that give rise to a specific set of social 'illnesses' or imbalances (2.0).

Instead of keeping the separation between 'poverty and overabundance' in place, Glissant proposed that political borders should be constructed in less fixed and more permeable ways, differentiating between more elusive entities such as atmospheres, landscapes or ways of living. This can be inferred from a quote in which Glissant indirectly referred to his personal experience of crossing the borders of nation-states, some of which have featured in 3.3.:

“Pour ce qui est des frontières légales entre les communautés, observons combien il est agréable de les franchir sans contrainte, sans mesure, de continuer comme naturellement de l’atmosphère Maroc à l’atmosphère Algérie, et de ce vivre-France à ce vivre-Espagne, et de l’air qu’un respire à Savoie à l’air qu’on respire en Toscane (“c’est encore loin la Toscane?”), et des déserts bleus du Pérou aux déserts ocre du Chili, vous vous sentez léger d’une inouïe vêtue, et plein d’un appétit ancien pour ce qui va

survenir, la frontière est cette invitation à goûter les différences, et tout un plaisir de varier, mais revenons ensuite à tous ceux qui ne disposent pas d'un tel loisir, les immigrants interdits, et concevons le poids terrible de cet interdit. Franchir la frontière est un privilège dont aucun moun ou timoune ne devrait être privé, sous quelque raison que ce soit. Il n'y a de frontière que pour cette plénitude enfin de l'outrepasser, et à travers elle, de partager à plein souffle les pures différences. L'obligation d'avoir à forcer quelque frontière que ce pourra être, sous la poussée de la misère, est aussi scandaleuse que les fondements eux-mêmes de cette misère le sont."⁴⁴⁸ (UNRDM 122-23).

The conviction expressed by Glissant here resonates strongly with the African model advocated by Mbembe ("The business of a border is, in fact, to be crossed"). As outlined above, according to Mbembe, pre-colonial as much as contemporary African cultures, conceive sovereignty less in terms of control of territory as much as in terms of networks and relationships that allow for multiple forms of political membership outside the binary between citizens or foreigners. Citizenship was thus not predicated on relations based on blood or soil, but on what Mbembe calls a 'foundational debt' towards those who live in the community, but also towards the ancestors and non-human world:

"In between being a citizen and being a foreigner there was a whole repertoire of alternative forms of membership—building alliances through trade, marriage or religion, incorporating new commerce, refugees, asylum seekers into existing polities—that was the norm. You dominated by integrating foreigners. All kinds of foreigners. And peoplehood—not nationhood—included not only the living, but also the dead, the unborn, humans and non-humans".

Philosophical and Historic Contexts of Glissant's Border Thought

As a concrete illustration of the kind of borders Glissant imagined, Glissant's depiction of the fictional pre-colonial African town of Onkolo in his novel *Sartorius* might serve as a fitting point in case (4.3.2.). The border delimiting the town of Onkolo is a *natural border* between the forest and the savannah as well as a *cultural border* between the Batouto people and the Imoko, whose peculiar practice of time-keeping sets them apart (SAT 25-26). Glissant's portrayal of Onkolo evokes the kind of permeable and invisible boundaries between pre-colonial African kingdoms referred to by Mbembe, where political power radiated from several centres, creating overlapping spheres of influence and belonging, instead of the clear-cut divisions between modern nation-states taking the imaginary form of relatively hermetic and mutually exclusive boxes.

Philosophically, Glissant's new border thought is based on the difference between the

⁴⁴⁸"As for the legal borders between communities, let us observe how nice is to cross them without constraints, without measure, to continue naturally from the Moroccan atmosphere to the Algerian atmosphere, from a French-living, to a Spanish-living, from the air one breaths in the Savoy to the air one breaths in Tuscany ('is it still far until Tuscany?'), and the blue deserts of Peru to the ochre desert of Chile, you feel the lightness of an unheard of garment, and full of an ancient appetite for that which will arise, the border is this invitation to taste the differences, and a pleasure to vary, but let us right away turn to those who do not have this luxury, the illegal immigrants, and let us conceive the terrible weight this interdiction brings. To cross borders is a privilege that should not be withheld from any *moun* or *timoune*, whatever the reason. There are no border other than for the plentitude to finally cross them, and to share the breath of pure differences across them. The the obligation to enforce whatever border it may be, by the push of misery, is as scandalous as the very foundations of this misery", my translation.

conceptions of being, *être* and *étant*, which I introduced in the theory section of the introduction as being closely entangled with his notions of beauty and the living (1.4.1.). Whereas the former is described as absolute and fixed, the latter is relative and transformative, an 'inexplicable structure' and a 'revolution onto itself' that does not correspond to the marked-out territory with water-proof boundaries (UNRDM 179, 181). In other words, just as all of nature undergoes constant changes, so do human beings and the communities they form. Any attempt at assigning a fixed territory to a particular group of human beings would therefore go against the epistemic foundations of Glissant's philosophy. As Chamoiseau wrote in that regard “*Le vivant est ainsi. Sans fixité, ni vérité*” (The living is like that, without fixedness, without truth) (2017, 73) and that accordingly 'everything migrates, there is no life without movement' (79). In addition to his reference to a transformative concept of 'being', Glissant articulated his border thought with reference to his vision of the Tout-Monde, whose 'infinity of differences' are also undergoing constant and unpredictable changes (TTM 176). The driving force shaping the Tout-Monde and Glissant's conception of world history more generally, is creolisation in the sense of a *métissage* of imaginations and as a process that is to some extent delinked from the intentions of humankind as pointed out in Glissant's assertion that, “*le monde se creolise*” (the world creolises itself) (IPD 15). Again reminiscent of Mbembe's African model, circulation, movement and mobility are the main catalysts of creolisation, and migration is considered to be an essential part of the 'relational health of the world' in Chamoiseau's words (2017, 96).

As much as Glissant's border thought was derived from the above outlined theorisations it was also informed by the physical presence of the Caribbean landscape. Glissant, for instance, pointed out that it would be impossible to convincingly define the borders separating the individual islands making up the Caribbean archipelago because their borderlines would always shift with the waves of the ocean:

“*Les frontières entre les lieux qui se sont constitués en archipels ne supposent pas des murs, mais des passages, des passes, où les sensibilités se renouvellent, où l'universel devient le consentement à l'impénétrable des valeurs, l'une en l'autre accordées, chacune valable en l'autre, et où les pensées du monde (les lieux-communs) enfin circulent à l'air*”⁴⁴⁹ (PHR 57-58).

In a drawing titled *L'archipel est un passage, et non pas une mur* (The archipelago is a passage, and not a wall), Glissant illustrated this view by placing several islands of the archipelago in such a way that their borders overlap at several points and are drawn with multiple, uncertain lines.

⁴⁴⁹“The boundaries between places that are constituted as archipelagos do not take the form of walls, but passages, passages, where sensibilities renew each other, where the universal turns into a mutual consent of impenetrable of values, one that is reciprocally granted, valid for one another, and where the thoughts of the world (commonplaces) can finally at last in the air”, my translation.

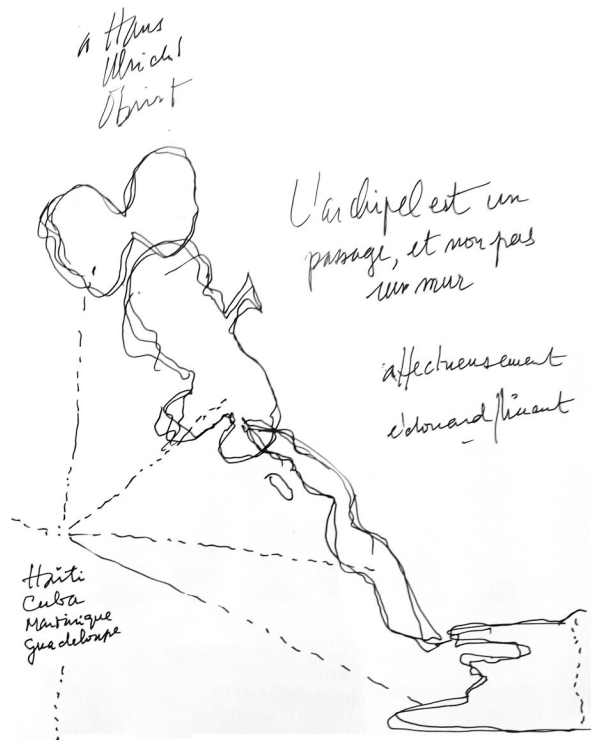


Illustration 7: Glissant's drawing *L'archipel est un passage, et non pas un mur*, dedicated to Hans Ulrich Obrist, exhibited as part of the exhibition *Mondialité* in Villa Empain, Brussels 2017.

The islands of this imaginary map are a direct expression of what Glissant considered to be a natural Caribbean commonality due to a shared landscape, culture and history that contradicts the geographic and political differences that persist between them as a result of different colonial projects. The notion of the archipelago is furthermore suggestive in this context since it alludes to Glissant's border thought being invested in exploring alternative shapes for political communities falling outside the model of sovereign nation-states and federations (4.1.2.). In analogy to the Caribbean landscape, Glissant perceived the *Tout-Monde* as an archipelagic structure made up of egalitarian islands. In addition to the general normative direction of his border thought, which I outlined in this sub-section, the archipelagic model is furthermore of particular importance for his border thought since it links the utopian thrust of his thoughts on borders with his practical work on community creations (see chapter 4). Combining these realms of his political work can lead into what I perceive to be two different directions:

The first direction implies a shift from the existing nation-state model to what he called 'relation-states' (QLMT 9). This entails working towards a change within the existing landscape of political communities towards being, both, more open towards migrants and more willing to perceive themselves as being made up of diverse identities. This direction features in Chamoiseau's *Frères migrants* without being spelled out in its more concrete implications. The second direction,

which Chamoiseau also alludes to but leaves unexplored, calls for the imagination of utopian alternatives to the nation-state model along the lines of the archipelago and the 'small country', which I perceive as implying alternative political units, some of which been mentioned in my previous study of Glissant's world-communities (4.3.). These alternative political communities could provide more direct forms of democratic engagement, such as the city and networks of solidarity (4.4.), but also more detached forms of political engagement, such as the spiritual communities explored in 4.3. that do not necessarily have to be bound by a shared territory, but by certain common-places, that are defined as placed where 'two imaginaries of the world meet' (UNRDM 110). The following sub-section will describe some of these alternative models for political communities that can, in my view, be derived from Glissant's border thought.

5.2.2. 'The Walls Are in Our Head' – From the Problem of Migration to the Political Force of *Migrances*

The previous sub-section outlined the general contours of Glissant's border thought and its larger philosophical context. In this sub-section I will engage with the concrete implications of a Glissantian conception of borders in response to contemporary European political debates around migration by critically engaging with Patrick Chamoiseau's essay *Frères migrants* (2017). Chamoiseau's essay warrants closer inspection in this context for several reasons. Chamoiseau not only co-wrote the pamphlet *Quand les murs tombent* with Glissant, which is among Glissant's most explicit and elaborate engagements with the political problem of borders. In the last decades of his life, the collaboration between Glissant and Chamoiseau moreover reached symbiotic levels between the self-proclaimed disciple Chamoiseau and his literary master, to the extent that on a discursive level it is difficult to tell the style and contents of their writings apart. Disentangling Glissant's and Chamoiseau's thinking on borders might therefore appear to be a futile endeavour. Instead of such an analytical approach, I suggest studying Chamoiseau's text as an example for a *Glissantian response* to the migration crisis of 2015. As Chamoiseau explains on the back cover of the book, and as I have mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, *Frères migrants* was written in direct response to the 'European refugee crisis', and an imaginary phone-call by the spectre of Glissant, reminding him of the duty to intervene in political debates concerning the future of the Tout-Monde. In the course of my engagement with Chamoiseau's text, I will sketch out the main lines of thought pertaining to how Glissant's border can be brought into relation with the issue of migration, but also identify where my own reading of Glissant's politics of relation differs from Chamoiseau's interpretation.

A Glissantian Response to the 'Migration Crisis' – Patrick Chamoiseau's Frère migrants

Underneath the general poetic tone of *Frères migrants*, Chamoiseau's essay proceeds in a

relatively classical analytical fashion, by first seeking to identify the root causes underlying the human catastrophe which has taken on 'biblical dimensions' (15), then moving on to a description of its immediate and longterm effects, to finally, evaluating different forms of solutions and the different degrees of urgency, to be accorded to them. In the following engagement with his text, I will trace this general direction of his argument, before contrasting it with an approach informed by my work on Glissant's politics of relation.

Writing from a particular place and time, the French Hexagon at the height of the 'migration crisis' in 2015, Chamoiseau's narration effectively negotiates the complex entanglements of interpersonal and the international levels at play in the migration crisis. This is, for example, apparent in the way a conversation with two of his friends, Hind ('the one who films') and Jane ('the one who writes') (13)) is interwoven with a meditation of the global dimension of the political issue to which they respond with their actions. Again, this can be read as illustrating the sensitivity for how the minor and major dynamics, how 'small and big plants' (3.2.) are connected to one another in the framework of a Glissantian politics of relation.

Based on the conviction that, as Chamoiseau writes, "the walls are in our head and impose their horizons on us" (*les murs sont dans nos têtes et nous imposent leurs horizons*) (106), the main poetic and political intervention of *Frères migrants*, takes place on the level of the imaginary. In its interrogation of the dominant images dominating the depiction of migration locally and globally, Chamoiseau pursues a quintessentially postcolonial approach to migration as outlined above. This distinction is an important one because it claims the right for the discursive intervention to not be judged according to its applicability to the existing political framework. Moving from practical policy considerations to the plane of the imaginary, here also entails a conceptual move away from political communities constituted as nation-states towards the exploration of alternative political models. In line with the general framework of this thesis, this shift could thus, once more, be said to be characterised by an intellectual movement of marronage.

Instead of claiming that this intervention on the plane of the imaginary is superior or exclusive towards other forms of political action, Chamoiseau points out that the need to propose new representations of migration in the context of the recent 'migration crisis', should be considered as a 'tutelary' form of intervention alongside immediate humanitarian assistance to those suffering from the violence inflicted upon them by border regimes (105). As a way of differentiating his own arguments from the ones advanced in prevalent media narratives, Chamoiseau creates the neologism '*migrances*' (migrancies). The decision to coin a new phrase for a widely discussed phenomenon is part of Chamoiseau's general intention to invert the negative associations currently attached to the notion of migration, as anomaly, crisis and as a problem or danger to the receiving

society. Although the migrancies Chamoiseau writes about pose political problems that demand an urgent response, they are not a problem in and of themselves. As Chamoiseau points out in what I consider to be the main argument of *Frères migrants*: “these migrancies are a force of Relation. They are essential to the relational health of the world”⁴⁵⁰ (96). The conceptual shift to no longer perceive migration as a political danger to the status quo, echoes the insistence formulated by Glissant and Chamoiseau in *Quand les murs tombent* that 'a new wind blows in the word immigration' (QLMT 23). These formulations express the belief that migration, more than any other political factor, and migrants more than any other actor, are the main powers shaping the Tout-Monde in the 21st century.⁴⁵¹

The Capitalist Imaginary As Root Problem

From the Tout-Monde-perspective endorsed by Chamoiseau, the recent events in the Mediterranean are not an exceptional phenomenon, but stand in a continuation of a longer tradition, as mentioned above, which Chamoiseau links back to the transatlantic slave trade (23, 123, 127). In his analysis of the migration crisis, Chamoiseau thus follows Glissant's approach of attempting to identify what he called a 'curse' or root problem haunting particular societies and to differentiate them from the more visible symptoms deriving from them. In the same vein, the relational approach Chamoiseau endorses differentiates (invisible) causes from the more visible symptoms. The rampant rise in violence migrants are subjected to, wide-spread xenophobic sentiment, discrimination and physical violence in the receiving countries, on the one side, and the 'push factors' behind the decision to cross international borders, on the other side, all count among the symptoms of a deeper lying issue from a Glissantian angle.

Instead of opting for an approach that deals with the specific conflicts that have sparked large movements of migration recently individually,⁴⁵² Chamoiseau suggests that they could all be linked to a single cause: the triumph of neoliberalism and its idea of maximum profit, which in Chamoiseau's view has taken full control of mankind (33). As a result, the figure of 'the human' has been replaced with a celebration of the figure of the consumer (49). The domination of economic logic over all spheres of life, which is for Chamoiseau an absolute, has brought to the fore what Chamoiseau calls our 'barbaric nature', a barbarity which he considers to be innate in all human beings and which can only momentarily be surpassed, and to which Western democracies are not any more immune than the 'developing world'. This economic line of argument echoes several of

450 “*les migrances sont une des forces de la Relation. Elles ne sauraient manquer à la santé relationnelle du monde*”, my translation.

451 Manuela Bojadžijev and Serhat Karakayalı's thesis of the 'autonomy of migration' (2010) reiterates several of the key concerns of Glissant's border thought, especially in Chamoiseau's rendition. Instead of being cast as passive victims, migrants from this perspective thus become active agents who *make politics* and directly affect policy changes, such as expanded conceptions of citizenship.

452 The enumeration of Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia etc. which Chamoiseau takes from Agier's essay (2015), takes on a symbolic value and could be replaced by another set of countries in a few years from now.

the key charges against a global totalitarian capitalist project advanced by Lorey, Negri and Hardt (see 5.1.).

While the identification of neoliberalism as the *root problem* underlying the deaths of tens of thousands of migrants might, however, appear reductionist and simplistic, for a Glissantian point of view on border regimes it is not at all trivial. For an approach seeking to primarily intervene on the plane of the imagination, the dominant imagination – which Chamoiseau considers to be one of profit maximisation and the protection of national interests tied to it – needs to be identified as such before an alternative to it can be explored. This capitalist approach, which is legitimised by an economic logic, has immediate consequences on a deeper cultural or imaginary level. For Chamoiseau, these consequences can, for instance, be observed in the willingness of large parts of societies to accept the deaths of migrants at their borders as an almost naturalised occurrence (120). The identification of capitalist logic at the basis of the migration crisis, which Chamoiseau upholds, is not meant to imply that the armed conflicts and structural inequalities around the world, and the West's direct or indirect involvement in them, do not need to be recognised and studied individually. As Chamoiseau argues, a Glissantian study mainly cautions that they need to be read relationally, in order to avoid the danger of perceiving them as isolated or distant phenomena that are 'not of our doing and not our duty' (41). Because the *Tout-Monde* is one, Chamoiseau insists that any form of resistance that does not know how to relate its different parts, runs the risk of remain sterile (38), thereby reiterating concerns associated with Negri and Hardt's global politics of the Multitude through the worldly dimension of Glissant's *marronage*.

As much as his essay is invested in changing the prevalent perception of the causes behind the choice or need to move – by insisting on an intrinsic 'migratory energy' responding to the 'secret call from that which exists otherwise' (67) –, Chamoiseau also offers a different reading of the 'causes' behind the violence against immigrants exercised by the receiving nation-states and parts of their population. From a Glissantian perspective, organised and spontaneous forms of xenophobic violence are not the expression of a natural will to protect scarce resources on the part of the 'receiving society'. For a state, whose primary function is to protect an economic system that only allows 'the same' to pass through its borders, which Chamoiseau equates with money and merchandise, humans are a dangerous provocation in that they represent something alien or 'different' to it. In the way he or she represents that which Glissant calls 'the living' (80), the migrant's insistence to cross legal and highly militarised borders is a painful reminder to the nation-state that it is impossible to 'block out the world', but also that the migrants 'do not surrender the world to the reign of multinational corporations' in Chamoiseau's view of the power struggle shaping our times (56). For Chamoiseau, the migrant's 'worldliness' therefore provokes the envy of

those who have lost this kind of sense or knowledge of the world, and who, reciprocally, 'can no longer be read by the world' (118).

From the Migrant as Victim of Globalisation to the Poet of the Tout-Monde

In Chamoiseau's suggestion of 'solutions' to the political problem posed by the 'uncontrollable flows of migration' his main argument calls for an imaginary shift away from the abstract figure of the migrant being associated with suffering and victimhood towards key theoretical figures in the Glissantian philosophical universe who are occupied with the creation of relations: the poet, the dreamer, the seer, the sorcerer, the hunter, the adventurer and the traveller (17, 74). As a result, in Chamoiseau's depiction, the abstract figure of the migrant turns from a *passive victim* of the forces of globalisation into an *active agent*, a relator and creator, the central force shaping the Tout-Monde. Driven by a vision of worldliness, 'they do not know how to read any of the ancient borders and create new passages' (67). In a European context, this can be read as implying that migrants insist, against the policies endorsed by member states of the European Union (EU) and the Schengen System that *the Mediterranean is not a boundary*. In that regard, the political force of migrants is not exercised within the existing framework of nation states, civic or human rights. They are not 'political refugees' or 'political migrants' in the established sense associated with the so-called 'boat people' who fled Vietnam in the 1970s (Agier 2016, ch. 2). Their main political force, for Chamoiseau, lies in their very insistence to exist and to move, an insistence that calls for a new conception of rights outside the rule of law, which Chamoiseau refers to as the 'imaginary forces of the law' (2017, 60). The migrants Chamoiseau writes about embody a different kind of living, inhabiting and travelling of the world (117), a practice which Michel Agier has called '*cosmopolitanism ordinaire*' (ordinary cosmopolitanism) (2016, ch. 2).

In his anthropological studies on refugee camps, Agier refers to the 'world of camps' as 'spaces of relation', and laboratories for a new kind of identity that allows people to 'keep a certain distance to their own identity, and a distance to the society in which they have arrived' (ch. 2). In the process, a kind of fraternity emerges that does not create 'closed communities', but takes on the shape of 'treasury of contacts', that helps them survive (Chamoiseau 2017, 114). In the process, refugee camps become 'hotspots of cosmopolitan consciousness' for Agier or what Glissant called 'breeding grounds of creolisation' (UNRDM 215), and what I have studied as world-communities in the preceding chapter. For Agier, the kind of cosmopolitanism emerging out of these spaces is different than a global jet-setting way of life defined against the local (Zygmunt Baumann), cohabitation or coexistence (Judith Butler) or a cosmopolitan consciousness based on shared risks (Ulrich Beck). The notion does thus not refer to a global classes, a cosmopolitan mode of politics or a cosmopolitan consciousness, but from *the experience of the border* in the larger sense of the term:

“The experience of those who experience the concrete reality of the world, its roughness, that experience a passage between border that can stretch out in time and space. It is in these border situations where the relation to the other is directly put to the test, the unknown which is also the incarnation of that which is the world for the one who finds himself there, arriving at the border”⁴⁵³
(Agier 2016, ch. 2)

Crossing several countries slowly (by foot), the migrants Agier has in mind develop a knowledge of the world that remains elusive to a global hyper mobile elite. This kind of 'ordinary cosmopolitanism' is not tied to any social class, but a condition that associates the lived experience and the abstract thought of borders akin to Glissant's figure of the poet. While the celebration of the migrant as an abstract political figure might appear as an undue romanticism or wilful ignorance towards the concrete struggles of resistance and survival fought by and on behalf of migrants for decades, it is important to remark that this conception does not imply an inherent 'goodness of the migrant', but seeks to underline a relational quality that is often obliterated. At several points in his essay Chamoiseau insists that the deaths and suffering brought about by movements across political borders should trigger a learning process that would allow people to develop an imaginary of relation, or to see the Tout-Monde, echoing Glissant's belief that it is only through movements of migration to the 'opulent parts of the world', that the totality of the differences of the world are beginning to be recognised (UNRDM 83). If that were the case, the relational lesson to be learned from the human catastrophe could take the shape of what Chamoiseau calls a greater humanism, or a 'higher conscience' as opposed to a 'good conscience' (2017, 28, 32, 41-42). According to Chamoiseau, this kind of alternative humanism would have to go beyond the values of *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* as they are enshrined in the first Article of the *UN Human Rights Declaration* and radically extend them to include, “*le partage, l'équité, la dignité humaine et le bonheur pour tous*” (sharing, equality, human dignity and happiness for all). The proposition of 'relational harmony' as the objective of international politics is, of course, utopian in a conventional sense. In a sympathetic light, Chamoiseau's call for an extension of the existing paradigm of human rights, can be read as a concretisation of a Glissantian relational ethics (see 1.3.2.) and as a critique of the existing charter of human rights as being too minimalist and based on a Western universalist tradition. Approached more critically, the normative goal proposed by Chamoiseau could be rejected as impractical for any concrete attempt at effectively countering the exclusionary violence inflicted by contemporary border regimes.

453“*L'expérience de celles et ceux qui éprouvent la concrétude du monde, sa rugosité, qui font une expérience d'un passage des frontières qui peut s'étendre dans le temps et dans l'espace. Et c'est dans les situations de frontières que se met à l'épreuve directement la relation avec l'autre, un inconnu qui est aussi l'incarnation de ce qu'est le monde pour celui qui se trouve là, arrivant à la frontière*”, my translation.

A Political Alternative Or '... just one of those sentiments ... ?'

As outlined above, Chamoiseau's essay offers perhaps the single most elaborate 'application' of Glissant's border thought to the issue of the contemporary migration crisis, which is the reason why I am engaging with this text here at length. Beginning with the acknowledgment of a set of Glissantian axioms, adopting a global angle (mondiality) and reading the phenomenon relationally, Chamoiseau's text demonstrates that, seen through a Glissantian lens, the main actors of the 'migration issue' appear in a new normative light. By shifting the discussion onto the terrain of the imaginary, and arguing that what is needed is a different regime of representation in order to change the violent nature of powerful border regimes, Chamoiseau actively performs this politics of relation by *creating a different representation in writing*. In writing, Chamoiseau also argues that small, private, interpersonal actions, such as the simple gesture of offering a coffee to a stranger need to be seen as 'sparkles of relational politics'. Spelling out what such a relational sparkle, as the acceptance of the other's opacity, could look like in the context of interpersonal interactions of hospitality, Chamoiseau writes:

*“Offering someone a coffee and being able to say: 'You are not me, you do not resemble me, you do not do what I would like you to do, you are free and opaque the way I can be in your eyes, and I am offering you this from my heart'. Or even: 'We do not have a shared history, we only have a future, a shared one without a doubt, but impossible to foresee, and I offer you this from the heart'”*⁴⁵⁴ (88).

This image is in line with Glissant's own emphasis that the importance of individual actions needs to be acknowledged as much collective initiatives. This sensibility for 'small acts' underlines the practical nature of a politics of relation that is performed in the realm of the possible, instead of, or rather in addition to, large scale organisations geared towards the overthrow of the capitalist system, such as the Occupy movements mentioned in the first section. Nevertheless, readers searching for more robust alternatives to the contemporary politics around the complex of migration might be dissatisfied with the utopian thrust of Chamoiseau's Glissantian propositions. The hope he expresses in the possibility of the deaths of migrants, to 'open our eyes to the reality of the Tout-Monde' (28, 32), or that they could bring about a “much larger humanism, a more profound and more humble kind, more adapt to the living”⁴⁵⁵ (71), conferring 'a new soul to borders' (*une autre âme aux frontières*) (112), can easily be dismissed as optimistic at best, or at worst like a 'toothless' performance of old humanist-cosmopolitan values.

Pre-empting this line of criticism, Chamoiseau writes in *Frères migrants* that, as a concept, Glissant's relation is not opposed to the Enlightenment values enshrined in the declaration of human

⁴⁵⁴“*Tendre un café et pouvoir dire: 'Tu n'es pas moi, tu ne me ressembles pas, tu ne feras pas ce que j'aimerais que tu fasses, tu es libre et opaque comme je peux l'être à tes yeux, et je t'offre ceci de grand cœur...' Ou encore: 'Nous n'avons pas d'histoire commune, nous n'avons qu'un devenir, sans doute à partager mais en tout cas impossible à prévoir, et je t'offre ceci de grand cœur...'*”, my translation.

⁴⁵⁵“*un humanisme bien plus large, plus profond et plus humble, mieux conforme au vivant*”, my translation.

rights, but that the extension for which he argues is 'consubstantial' to it. If one of them would be ignored, relation would not take place and *mondiality* would just remain “one of those sentiments that do not risk anything and do not transform anything”⁴⁵⁶ (72). Practically speaking, one of these values will, however, always be ignored, be it on a national or international level. One of the weaknesses of Chamoiseau's account can therefore be attributed to the fact that the utopian nature of his claims are not tied back to the practical level of the 'politics of politicians'. Instead of merely relying on acts of interpersonal generosity and care, which could be dismissed as minimalist, or a call for the endorsement of an ideal Humanism on an international scale, which could be dismissed as unrealistic, I would argue that Glissant's politics of relation – in response to the issue of migration – can be strengthened when it is connected with concrete institutional propositions that translate the general utopian thrust of his philosophy into concrete alternatives to current political regimes. In 2.3., 3.3. and 4.3. I have indicated the form this kind of translation took in Glissant's own political practice. Instead of relying on the progressive potentials of existing political nation-states, as Chamoiseau explicitly does when he bemoans the relative weakness of the state in relation to the overpowering influence of capitalism (2017, 121), this Glissantian political practice would necessarily have to include a re-imagination of the forms political communities could take outside the paradigm of nation-states, human rights and neoliberal economy. To be clear, Glissant himself did not spell out the contours of this kind of politics of relation, instead he repeatedly alluded to the fact that it 'remained to be imagined'.

Considering his political work as a whole, as I have done in the previous three chapters, I am however suggesting that Glissant's work contains several concrete indicators for the directions one could pursue in the formulation of such a politics of relation around the complex of borders and migration. This work, which I am going to pursue in the following section, implies moving beyond Glissant's own formulations and conceptualisations by subtracting the abstract political implications alluded to by his border thought and actually 'taking the risk' of imagining the implications of his abstract concepts for the constitution of contemporary political communities.

Section Summary

This section explored the philosophical background and the general contours of Glissant's border thought. I pointed out how the discussion of the previous sections inform or relate to these abstract theorisations of movements across borders. As became apparent throughout my discussion, his work can particularly be related to the model proposed by Achille Mbembe's imagination of borderlessness and the larger tradition of postcolonial thinking about migration and borders. I have, in this respect, particularly highlighted the specific historic and geographic context from which his

⁴⁵⁶“un de ces sentiments qui ne se risquent à rien et ne transforment rien”, my translation.

work on borders emerged, as well as a reconceptualisation of the migrant as a political agent in the 21st century, as aspects that were evoked by Glissant and Chamoiseau along with other postcolonial scholars. Pointing out some of the weaknesses in Glissant's normative claims, and discussing those with regards to Chamoiseau's application of a Glissantian approach to borders in his essay *Frères migrants*, I proposed combining Glissant's thinking about movements and borders with his work on community creations as part of his practice of intellectual marronage. In my view, this combination enables a step away from an abstract endorsement of an 'extended humanism' towards more practical translations of Glissant's ideas, as well as a marked difference from prevalent postcolonial approaches to migration. In addition to a minimalist or critical interpretation of Glissant's border thought, I suggested that a more radical or rather creative interpretation, working of the image of the archipelago. Taking a step into this speculative direction, the ensuing section is dedicated to an exploration of what the contours of an applied Glissantian border thought might look like.

5.3. New Borders for New Communities – Notes Towards an Applied Glissantian Border Thought

“Pas un programme n'envisage une véritable politique de la Relation, la reconnaissance ouverte des différences, sans que celle-ci soient à porter en bloc au compte d'un communautarisme déterminant [...]

Ce serait vivre la beauté du monde”⁴⁵⁷

– Édouard Glissant, *Une nouvelle région du monde* (UNRDM 84)

This section explores the theoretical and political potentials of Glissant's approach to the issues of borders, migration and the set-up of political communities as proposed by his border thought (5.2.), specifically considered against the background of the 'European migration crisis' of 2015. The main argument of this section is that Glissant's work offers an alternative epistemological and normative framework through which contemporary political issues arising around the phenomenon of repressive border regimes can be studied, that can complement existing postcolonial scholarship around this issue (Kerner 2019). To demonstrate this point, this section works with Glissant's border thought as an analytical lens and proposes a set of directions for a Glissantian study of border regimes to pursue.

Glissant's Éloge de la différence

As outlined above, bringing up Glissant's philosophy of relation in response to the events of 2015 is not far fetched. Glissant himself directly engaged with the political issue of migration, particularly towards the end of his life. In September 2006, Glissant was invited to speak at the opening of the International Literature Festival in Berlin. In his speech *Éloge des différents et de la différence* (2006) Glissant spoke against the background of rising levels of xenophobia in France and what he called a common 'failure to practice the magnetic relation to other communities'. He attributed this failure of relational imagination to an adherence to beauty perceived as the perfection of a form that excludes all others. In opposition to this view Glissant suggested a conception of beauty as an always elusive and 'secret vessel of all the world's differences'. Connecting these general arguments to the political issue of migration, he claimed that “the reception, the actual integration of migrants can only 'succeed' with a politics of relation that remains to be imagined”, and insisted that this kind of politics would have to be informed by a poetics attuned to dealing with difference not as something that separates or keeps apart, but as that which connects and creates relations. Speaking in 2006, Glissant could not have predicted, but perhaps foreseen, that hardly a decade later the debate about immigration into EU countries would reach new heights in what the

⁴⁵⁷“Not one programme envisions a true *politics of relation*, the open recognition of differences, without them being carried in blocks or in terms of a prescriptive communitarianism [...]. That would mean to live the beauty of the world“, my translation.

media referred to as the 'European migration crisis' that followed the civil war in Syria. Decades after 'traditional' immigration countries and former colonial metropolises like France, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium and Great Britain formulated policy responses to the arrival of hundreds of thousands of migrants from their former colonies, the 'civil rights movement of the 21st century' (Angela Davis) also reached the rest of Europe. After more than a century of 'managed migration' that was primarily geared to fuel the growth of its own economy, countries like Germany were forced to face up to what Glissant called in his Berlin speech the inevitable and unstoppable 'encroachment of the world'. The so-called 'summer of migration', provoked a genuine political moment, both in the sense that it interrupted the day-to-day business of politics in the EU by throwing wide open the identitarian debate of 'who we are in relation to them' (Agier 2016, intro.), as well as in the sense of Jacques Rancière's notion of political activity as taking place at the moment of 'dissensus' when those who are invisible, not considered to be part of a political community and without language, suddenly become visible and prove that they, in fact, are speaking human beings, leading to "a conflict aimed at deciding what is speech or mere growl" (1.2.2.). Across several EU member states, the aftermath of this political moment did not lead to a change in government discourse, which perceived immigration primarily as a problem that needed to be contained and prevented, providing the basis for a strengthening of wide-spread xenophobic sentiments and the rise to power of several right wing parties.

Towards an Application of Glissantian Political Thought

How could the pillars of a Glissantian politics of relation be applied in response to the issue of migration in ways that complement the approach proposed by Chamoiseau in the previous section? As I have pointed out in 1.4.1., Glissant's philosophy of relation defies an easy translation into an 'analytic grid' that could be conveniently applied to study political problems across the globe. My intention here is not to turn it into one, but to take up the challenge Glissant evoked in his Berlin speech in 2006 to imagine the form a politics of relation could take by exploring some of the directions Glissant's own work points to. This line of study is particularly important against criticism levelled against the analytic and political potentials of Glissant's work relying on the fact that most of Glissant's explicit formulations remain on an abstract normative level, and appeal to a vague sense of expanded humanism, as critically discussed regards to the work of Chamoiseau (2017).

Due to the scope of this section, I am not proposing a detailed Glissantian analysis of the European border regime. Instead am here limiting myself to a set of general suggestions for the direction such a study could take that would be informed by the overall findings of this research. This is to avoid a truncated empiric analysis that would not do justice to either Glissant's approach,

nor to the complexity of the object of study. The experiment proposed here gains in relevance when one bears in mind that the feasibility of such an endeavour is far from self-evident. Whereas political analysis of Caribbean societies with analytical concepts deriving from European contexts have been canonised in political studies, the inverse still tends to warrant justification against the claim that European societies are 'too complex' to be studied through the lens of political theories developed from a Caribbean island. Pursuing such an approach, moreover, promises to enrich the already existing body of postcolonial perspectives on migration outlined in the previous section by explicitly exploring utopian alternatives operating both within and without the existing configuration of nation-states, human rights and the neoliberal economic system. In this regard, it will be particularly interesting to observe which additional suggestions can be made on the basis of Glissant's political archive, to supplement concrete policy propositions like the ones proposed by Gilroy (2004) in the previous section.

Despite its complexities and internal discrepancies, the border regime upheld by the EU is suggestive as a case study experimenting with a Glissantian perspective since, from the standpoint of the *Tout-Monde*, any political community that closes itself off from its surroundings, remains not only static and risks its own death, thereby posing a danger to the well-being of its own members, but more importantly, brings 'nothing but disaster to the world' (QLMT 3). The general question regarding any border regime, from a Glissantian perspective, asks what could be done to transform the shape of its borders from walls into points of passages enabling relations? And what other forms of political communities could be envisioned through Glissant's imaginary of relation?

In addition to the general conception and normative horizon of his border thought, as sketched out below, an engagement with his key concept of Relation and the root problem or curse is of crucial importance for the formulation of a response to these questions (1.4.1.). In his analysis of social and political issues, Glissant has repeatedly pointed out that socio-political problems, be they conflicts, socio-economic issues and widespread xenophobia, are tied to deeper cultural conceptions held by particular communities that inform their relations with the world. Regarding the Caribbean context and the island of Martinique in particular, this line of argument is particularly pronounced in Glissant's *Le discours antillais* (1981). On this basis he sought to identify what he called a 'curse' haunting particular societies and sought to differentiate these root problems from the more visible symptoms deriving from them (2.0.). As the previous section outlined, the triumph of the neoliberal imagination of profit maximisation is such a root problem underlying the migration crisis according to Chamoiseau's *Frères migrants* (2017, 33). A 'failure of the relational imagination' can be another, yet intimately related, example of such a curse that can result in a range of individual and collective psychological imbalances translating into a collectivised fear of

the other. From the vantage point of studying the relational imagination, or lack thereof, as harboured by individual political communities, a promising point of departure for political studies working with Glissant's ideas, would therefore be to attempt and re-relate a country's present to its past, in line with the arguments put forward in chapter 2, and to the broader landscape in which it exists as a political community, an approach to be deducted from the direction of chapter 3, approaches that are moreover in line with the general characteristics of postcolonial perspectives on migration as outlined by Ina Kerner (2019).

In the following I suggest to differentiate between two general directions a translation of Glissant's abstract border thought into concrete analytical framework could take when it is connected with his ideas about the set-up of communities (chapter 4). The first one takes a critical approach in that it seeks to change or reform the political arrangement of a given political community, an approach which can be found in most postcolonial critiques of contemporary migration regimes. The second direction, which I perceive to be more creative, explores the alternative shape these political communities could take.

5.3.1. The *Critical* Strand of a Glissantian Approach to Border Regimes

The first direction I will propose as a practical application of Glissant's border thought could be considered a critical proposal in that it does not explicitly problematise the model of the existing nation-states whose policies it interrogates, but makes the normative claims that, firstly, their borders should need to become more permeable, and secondly, that the imagined communities advocated by the agents of these nation-states would have to imagine both their histories and their contemporary social constitution as multiple, entangled and diverse as opposed to singular, autonomous and homogenous – a Glissantian argument I have also put forward with regards to the founding myths underlying political communities in chapter 2.

Re-Relating Histories – We Need New Founding Myths

How can one abstract from the various views and concepts related to migration and movement introduced across this thesis towards a Glissantian analysis of border regimes? Taking Glissant's concept of the foundational myth as point of departure (chapter 2), such a line of research could begin by studying to what degree the narrative underlying a political community suggests the existence of an atavist or creole identity. Borders are here primarily understood in their imaginary form, as a discourse differentiating 'us' from 'them'. In my view there are three, at times overlapping, directions that this kind of analysis could pursue. As Glissant has done in his work on the official and colonial Martinican history to which *Le discours antillais* established a counter-discourse (2.2.1.), a study of the narrative or foundational myth underlying a specific political

community, could first engage with a selected set of documents in order to identify the sense of history emerging from these texts. In this inquiry close attention would have to be paid to temporal separations or events that evoke historical ruptures or discontinuities. Whereas, for example, in the colonial account of Martinique big time markers such as the abolition of slavery in 1848 are attached to the term 'liberation', suggesting a radical break between the system of slavery and its abolition in the Caribbean, Glissant called for a re-reading of this historical change from the perspective of lived-experience that reveals the transformation of slave labour into paid labour (LDA 28). Along with historical ruptures, spatial separations and the sense of territoriality at the basis of national discourses would have to be examined. In the same vein in which Glissant emphasised how, in the case of Martinique, the relatedness of the Caribbean landscape was systematically disavowed through official government discourse, resulting in a kind of alienation or superiority complex among Martinicans who considered themselves to be more French than Caribbean (LDA 166-67), the relations between other countries, and their neighbouring countries, as well as 'Europe' and within the global community of nation-states could be studied. In each case, the question would be whether a relationship is acknowledged or disavowed, whether it is imagined as hierarchical or egalitarian or expressed in terms of dependence or interdependence. Thirdly, and most importantly, the prevalent sense of self and the role of the stranger in a political community would warrant attention. This interrogation would have to heed close attention to implied essential traits that have been passed on from generation to generation through genealogy, and that inform what it means to behave and to look in accordance with a national norm, as virtues that translate into a sense of legitimacy to inhabit a particular territory, as Glissant pointed out in his description of the foundational myth. As in the Martinican case, where Glissant pointed out how the 'African element' was systematically disavowed as constitutive cultural part of creole culture (LDA 391-92), cases where the presence, participation or contribution of 'the other' have been systematically negated, or disavowed need to be analysed. This would not only concern the presence of 'guest workers', seasonal workers as well as people from across the globe who came to Europe as a result of its various colonial enterprises. The same goes for the acknowledgement of attempts to completely exterminate the other from the national body. A fundamental acknowledgement of these dynamics as constitutive for a culture taking on composite or atavist form, would shape the description of the foundation myth.

Once an understanding of the official discourse has been established and certain atavist elements identified, one could set out to contrast it with an account that aims at re-relating the pieces of history that have been held separate or made invisible. Working from the temporal perspective of the Tout-Monde, comprising at least the last 500 years since Christopher Columbus

arrived in the 'New World', and being made up of a plethora of histories, it would relativise and de-centre European histories by using the global historical process of creolisation as its main point of reference and depicting the colonial entanglements and deprivation produced by racial capitalism. It would, moreover, point out those individuals who have played an enabling role in the process of creolisation, be they migrants, poets, adventurers or explorers, as much as those who sought to prevent the diversity of imaginaries from spreading by defending a belief in the 'One' and the 'Same'. It would measure the global standing of a political community not in terms of its financial or military strength, but through the relationality, mutuality and reciprocity it practices with other parts of the world, as opposed to a desire to dominate and become 'world champions'. Outside the official discourse, the parts forming this relational account of European history have been, and are still being, formulated, in writing and through actions. They do not need to be imagined from scratch but would have to be set into relation with one another. These 'relational sparkles' (Chamoiseau 2017, 89) include networks of solidarity for and among refugees, large-scale demonstrations against repressive immigration policies and for the acknowledgement of the diversity of people, among others. This already-existing politics of relation takes place in everyday interpersonal interactions, art galleries, theatres, cultural institutions fostering transnational exchanges and cultural journals. They intervene in the existing political system with the aim of opening up the construct of European identity, from homogeneous to diverse, and its positionality in international relations, from superiority to equality, with the goal of evoking a more general shift from nation-states to relation-states, as elaborated above.

Embracing the Other's Opacity – Keeping Up With the Times of the Tout-Monde

A second direction a Glissantian study of border regimes could pursue would approach the cultural question more directly as the matrix on which the historical narrative or founding myth outlined in the previous section is imagined and maintained. Culture would here be understood more generally as particular way of life expressing meanings, preferences and values, therefore entailing a particular conception of the human being and his or her relationships to 'others'. Of central importance for a cultural disposition towards relationality for Glissant was what he called the respect for opacity, which Glissant perceived as the precondition for developing an imaginary of relation, and an awareness of the Tout-Monde, both on the level of the individual and the collective (1.4.1.). Not insisting on transparency, or the necessity of knowing or fully understanding the other, or turning her or him into the same, does not preclude the possibility of friendship, love and other forms of solidarity in Glissant's view. Quite the opposite. In the same way that he insisted that it is possible to like or work with someone without fully 'knowing' him or her, he considered the 'refusal of that which one does not understand,' to be the quintessential disposition of racists (Diawara and

Glissant 2011, 14). As I have shown above, for Chamoiseau, the 'relational sparkle' contained in social interactions on the basis of accepting the other's opacity is equivalent with the political stance of renouncing the domination of the other, and in the same vein, the domination of the world. (Chamoiseau 2017, 88). In his anthropological studies of the contemporary global refugee crisis, Michel Agier has attributed a frequent sense of disappointment among activists assisting refugees to a cultural disposition requiring transparency and sameness as a basis for social interaction. Perceiving 'the refugee' either through a juxtaposition of dominant and dominated individual ('helping the sufferer'), a resemblance between the self and the other ('identity'), or an aestheticisation or exoticisation of otherness as 'everything we are not' ('radical otherness'), result in an absence of relationality in Agier's view, which in turn produces a shared sense of distrust and frustration on both sides (2016, ch. 1).

Working with Glissant's concept of opacity in this context, would therefore invite an extensive anthropological study which would begin by, firstly, exploring prevalent conceptions of culture. Is there such a thing as a shared understanding of culture in a particular political community and if so, is it perceived as something fixed or fluid, homogenous or diverse, and are its relations to other cultures perceived as hierarchical or horizontally, mutually enriching or mutually exclusive? Secondly, what is the perception of the human in this particular cultural set-up, what social or physical expectations does someone adhering to this culture have to meet, and how are relationships between individuals structured? A Glissantian study would operate with a distinct set of normative standards for measuring the relational wealth of cultures in this context. Against the view of culture as a static and hierarchical construct, replacing the concept of race in its classical biological form, Glissant's perceived cultures as fluid constructs and as a ways of thinking and being in the world that are mutually enriching one another other in a process of 'changing by exchanging – without losing or denaturing oneself' (UNRDM 66). Instead of justifying an alleged cultural superiority through the economic productivity of certain countries, Glissant argued that an over-valorisation of economic productivity should be replaced by valorising the ability of particular cultures to relate to the diversity of the Tout-Monde, and to live harmoniously with humans and non-humans. Cultures, from this perspective, are not mutually exclusive, or a threat to one another. Their interactions are the basis for wealth. On the level of the individual, this means that the worth of human beings is not measured in economic terms and according to the ideal of the homo economicus, the 'human work machine', that works as steadily as it works intelligently (Ha 2003, 95). As a result, foreigners would not occupy the lowest possible rank in this kind of culture, out of a fear that they 'take the jobs of locals' or unable to fully participate economically through a lack of language proficiency. Instead they would be given preferential treatment as newcomers and contributors to the survival of

the culture that would die without their revitalizing input (QLMT 3).

Placed in the context of debates on national cultures, the shift from the promotion of a singular cultural norm and of cultural homogeneity to the promotion of cultural relativism and diversity in European contexts would suggest a set of innovative policies that would transform 'walls into points of passage' as demanded by Glissant's border thought. Among these one could, for example, explore the introduction of a set of national languages that could exist and develop alongside each other. The decision to move away from the imperative to learn a singular language in order to participate in society would enable migrants to further pursue the professions and interests and would no longer confine them to a set of ethnicised low-income sectors for 'non-native-jobs'. Replacing the imperative for similarity and transparency with Glissant's 'right to opacity' would, furthermore, offer the basis for the construction of an actual 'welcome culture' in the sense of absolute hospitality suggested by Jacques Derrida's unconditional accommodation of the "absolute, unknown, anonymous" (Friese 2004, 72). This could take the form of affirmative action and economic empowerment programs explicitly geared towards preventing a stratification of society in which immigrants not adhering to a singular cultural norm occupy the social position of second rate citizens. The utopian nature of these interventions would, by and large, be directed at the construct of established political communities as they exist today in the form of nation-states. The acceptance of opacity on a cultural level, among other concepts discussed throughout this thesis, does however also allude to more structural shifts in the form of more radical political alternatives, which I will explore in the ensuing section.

5.3.2. A Creative Approach to a Glissantian Border Regime – The Future of Small Countries, Parallel Societies and the Archipelago of Cities

In addition to what I called a *minimalist* or *critical* strand of Glissant's border thought, I will now turn to what I consider to be its more *creative* or *imaginative* strands. This work proceeds from the realisation that, instead of assuming the sovereign nation-state as a given political norm, Glissant has consistently tried to rethink the shape and make-up of political communities on the basis that there can be no natural sense of a community and that it first needs to be created and imagined, as discussed throughout chapter 4. As I will elaborate in the following section this approach is also reflected by certain proponents of a radical democratic tradition. As discussed at length in the previous chapter, the Caribbean background against which Glissant's work developed contributed significantly to Glissant's repeated insistence on the need to construct new forms of community, on local, regional and global levels on other grounds than a traditional reliance on an assumed collective sense of solidarity due to a shared territory (*droit du sol*) or shared genealogy (*droit du sang*). The Tout-Monde's archipelagic structure, which Glissant and Chamoiseau

described as being 'receptive for the warmth of utopia' and as 'lifting the arts to the principle of global politics' towards the end of their letter to Barack Obama (LIBM 48) is the general context for Glissant's repeated insistence on his 'belief in the future of small countries' (IPD 153), which he first articulated in relation to the struggle for Martinican autonomy from France in the 1950 and 60s (Glissant and Couffon 2001, 48-50), and later reiterated as a slogan for a politics at the time of the Tout-Monde.

In the following, I explore the political potentials of the idea of replacing 'big, sovereign and homogenous nation-states', with 'small, diverse and interdependent countries'. I have already pointed out the necessity of further pursuing this line of inquiry in my presentation of Glissant's engagement for the *International Parliament of Writers* towards the end of the previous chapter. To reiterate, the notion of the 'small country' takes on several forms in Glissant's work. It can be tied to relatively small geographic spaces, like that of an island, quite literal small countries or cities, but can also be seen in a more deterritorialised sense and take on the forms of networks that relate what Glissant referred to as imaginary world-communities. In the previous chapter, I have already explored the forms and implications of the latter in some detail in my discussion of Glissant's work towards the creation of world-communities. I am now going to focus my attention on the former models, particularly the island and the city. This is not to suggest that the call for a new kind of cosmopolitanism and political allegiances based on spiritual or imaginary relations are not of relevance in the context of rethinking the political issue of movements across borders. Both theoretical and empiric work has made a convincing case against this assumption. What makes these clearly geographically defined spaces at this point of my study of interest is that they make the proximity between the utopian thrust of Glissant's border thinking and its possible translation into a concrete political practice more tangible.

As I pointed out before, Glissant's work is not immediately associated with urbanity,⁴⁵⁸ as much as with its interest in the Caribbean landscape and its natural vegetation, and although he remained sceptical of the mega cities of the world, as can be inferred from several dismissive remarks in his *Une nouvelle région du monde*, city life⁴⁵⁹ – and primarily in its Parisian and New York evocations – made up as much of the personal context in which he lived and worked as did rural- or island-life in Martinique. As Christina Kullberg convincingly shows in her essay *Île de France – The Construction of an Insular City* (2013), Glissant thought about the city, its internal architecture and the relations it harbours with its surroundings, in analogous ways to Caribbean

458Richard Burton even argues that Glissant's novelistic and political vision is 'anti-urban' and perceives cities as spaces of assimilation par excellence (1997, 81).

459The difference between traditional towns (surrounded by landscapes) and modern cities (cut-off) (UNRDM 209), the difference between villes-îles (visible sharing) and îlots-urban (ignorant about surroundings). Modern cities can only frequent the present, not the past or the future. (UNRDM 210-11) Slums and 'temporary towns' are the breeding ground of creolisation! (UNRDM 215), opening up to new regions.

islands. As I mentioned with reference to Paul Gilroy's (2004) suggestion of conviviality, cities are have historically been the breeding grounds for creolisation. It is therefore not too far fetched to translate his archipelagic thinking to an abstract consideration of the potentials of the city as one of the smallest political units of our time. Glissant's organisational work in the context of the IPW, in which Glissant served as vice-president from its inception in 1993 to its dismantling in 2003, offers another strong linkage between these two spaces as political models (see 4.4.2.).

The Archipelagic Model of Small Countries on Sub- and Supranational Levels

Archipelagic thought, according to Glissant, perceives the world as a collection of islands that constitute a whole in which the relations between individual parts are of essential importance (PHR 45). Opposing the image of the archipelago to that of a continent – the former being associated with diversity, fragmentation and uncertainty, the latter with homogeneity, completion and certainty (PHR 45) – Glissant proclaimed his 'belief in the future of small countries' (IP 153), thereby effectively extending his vision of the Caribbean as a political model to the world. Transferred to the context of borders and migration, I consider these abstract political images as not only offering a different imagination for how immigration policies within nation-states can be constructed, but also as offering a different model for political communities outside the nation-state paradigm, an imaginative line of flight I will outline in the following.

A Glissantian study of border regimes endorsing the concept of the archipelago could, as a first step, explore the ways in which national homogeneity and the perception of a political community as a closed and coherent whole is being produced. Such a study could begin by identifying particular paradigms informing the formulation of immigration policies. The integration paradigm, which Glissant identified as the prevalent approach in France, demands cultural assimilation to a fixed national cultural norm. As postcolonial scholars have indicated, this paradigm can be connected with colonial fantasies of 'taming the wild' and the civilisation mission (Ha 2003, 91), a reading which Glissant's commentary on integration of migrants in France growing out of the French colonial doctrine of assimilation echoes (UNRDM 83-84). In his *Traité du Tout-Monde* Glissant denounced the integration paradigm as a “great barbarity”:

*“La créolisation n'est pas une fusion, elle requiert que chaque composante persiste, même alors qu'elle change déjà. L'intégration est un rêve centraliste et autocratique. La diversité jou dans le lieu, court sur les temps, rompt et unit les voix (les langages). Un pays qui se créolise n'est pas un pays qui s'uniformise. La cadence bariolée des populations convient à la diversité-monde. La beauté d'un pays grandit de sa multiplicité”*⁴⁶⁰ (TTM 210).

⁴⁶⁰“Creolisation is not a fusion, it requires that each of its composite parts persists, even if they are already changing. Integration is a centralist and autocratic dream. Diversity plays itself out in places, it moves with the times, breaks and unifies voices (languages). A creolising country is not a standardising country. The colourful cadence of populations suits the world-diversity. The beauty of a country grows out of its multiplicity”, my translation.

As this quote makes explicit, Glissant's border thought problematised the notion of integration as a violation of human dignity, as well as a self-amputation of the receiving culture which deprives itself from the opportunity to enrich itself through the engagement with others. Achieving 'real integration' in Glissant's view would require working on the basis of acknowledging the others opacity and the possibility of relating without submitting them to a singular cultural standard (UNRDM 172, 207). Once the guiding rationale underlying the contemporary border regime is established, in a second step, the specific measures used as part of the integration programme of 'turning migrants into natives' warrants further scrutiny.

In the German case, for example, the two instruments that are prone to receive particular attention in this context would currently be the 'integration course', which requires migrants from vaguely classified non-Western countries to take up up to 945 lessons of German language, law, culture and history as a precondition for permanent residence (Ha 2009, 137) and the practice of scattering refugees across the federal states of Germany according to a strict numeric quota calculated through the number of inhabitants and tax revenue. Without having the space to further flesh this out into a full case study, I will here briefly point out another policy instrument since it links more directly to the image of the archipelago as a counter-model to culturally homogenous nation-states. In the process of scattering newcomers across the territory of the German state, families are separated across the different federal states that make up the German Republic (*Bundesländer*) and are confined to movement within its borders by a mandatory *Residenzpflicht* (Aikins and Bendix 2015). The rationale behind this division, which goes against the preferences of the individuals and communities concerned as well as considerations of available housing and the actual material resources of the federal states, is based on the fear of avoiding the creation of so-called 'parallel societies' (*Parallelgesellschaften*), of which the Berlin districts of Kreuzberg and Neukölln, to which most Turkish immigrants moved in the 1960s and 1970s, are regularly referenced in public discourses as deterrents. Instead, the guiding rationale of this policy is that through a high degree of isolation of these families their cultural differences will eventually 'dissolve' into the dominant culture of their surroundings. The result of the policy of scattering refugees across largely isolated rural areas is not only that sustaining networks among them is made more difficult, but also that refugee camps in isolated parts of the country are particularly vulnerable to xenophobic attacks.

As pointed out above, a Glissantian politics of relation is based on the belief in the progressive force of creolisation and is fundamentally opposed to an enforced cultural 'fusion'. Instead of working towards a dissolution of differences it is invested in supporting cultural differences, not in the form of segregation or an explicit disintegration, but as a way of supporting

the vital needs of of migrant communities in the form of establishing 'small countries' or 'parallel societies'. These would not be left to their own devices but would be provided with all the necessary infrastructure needed in order to maintain their political, economic and cultural networks and practices. Using the financial resources invested in the militarisation of the border and disciplinary measures could be re-invested in appropriate housing, hospitals, schools and universities. Whether against the will of German policy makers or with their help – to stick with the above cited example –, this process is already taking place in districts like Berlin-Neukölln and Kreuzberg, which are known as 'Little Istanbul' due to the fact that they house the second biggest number of Turkish nationals after Istanbul. These places will eventually accommodate a 'Little Damascus' in the months and years to come, following the arrival of Syrian refugees in 2015.

Section Summary

This section explored the theoretical and practical potentials of Glissant's border thought in response to the contemporary migration crisis. Translating Glissant's philosophy in such a way that it could be referred to as a tool for political analysis and for the imagination of alternative policy approaches to immigration required an engagement with the philosophical and conceptual foundations of his border thought and its connections to Glissant's overall commitment to the creation of communities that are attuned to the archipelagic structure of the *Tout-Monde*. In addition to the general normative thrust of his border thought, against which contemporary border regimes can be measured, it was possible to identify a set of directions which a more explorative Glissantian study of border regimes could take – a work that was, above all, intended to complement the poetic and philosophic line pursued by Chamoiseau in the previous section.

Working with the concepts of the foundational myth, opacity and the archipelago proved to be particularly productive as ways of engaging the historical narrative, the cultural disposition and the policy framework underlying specific immigration politics. In each case, it was not only possible to sketch the contours of a Glissantian critique but also to point to practical alternatives a Glissantian politics of relation would suggest. This served to move the utopian thrust of his border in a direction where it can be connected to other postcolonial approaches to border regimes. When coupled with his approach to borders, Glissant's concepts of the archipelago and the small country in particular suggest the invention of new political formats beyond the nation-state, of which the city appeared as a particularly productive space to experiment with practical expressions of a relational imaginary. This part of my study therefore confirmed the initial intuition driving the research of this chapter, namely that moving Glissant's literary work into the realm of political studies can be a rewarding exercise, not only for scholarship interested in working with Glissantian concepts outside the realm of cultural criticism, but also for research on border regimes seeking to

explore new forms of borders and belonging.

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, the lines of enquiry sketched out had to remain on a rather general level, and warrant to be engaged with in greater depth to get a full grasp of the strength and potential pitfalls of a Glissantian political study of borders. Glissant's disposition to employ rather general conceptual binary oppositions, such as the opposition atavist/composite cultures, opacity/transparency, archipelago/continent, make his thought prone to criticism calling for more nuanced analysis. From my point of view, Glissant's philosophy of relation is, however, not at all incompatible with this demand, an argument I will elaborate in the concluding chapter by discussing the general (anti)oppositional characteristic of Glissant's politics of relation (6.3.). The importance of taking up this challenge is underlined by the fact that, just like the world at large, Glissant's philosophy of relation predicts that countries like Germany are already creolising and need to find non-violent means of engaging with this reality (IPD 15). A Glissantian politics of relation would perceive this process not as a national crisis but a historic opportunity for a political communities' psycho-cultural well-being and positioning in the Tout-Monde.

5.4. Glissant's Democratic Imaginary of Relation and the Project of Decolonising Democracy

*“les essais tourmentés de la démocratie et si elle peut vraiment être directe,
tout cela vise à établir que dans les profondeurs l'être, ou la Relation,
consent des frontières, des passages,
la difficulté de nos poétiques étant de savoir d'abord
retrouver ces passages et de savoir ensuite y parcourir”⁴⁶¹
– Édouard Glissant, *Une nouvelle région du monde* (UNRDM 181)*

This last section engages with a central object of discussion in the field of political studies, namely questions revolving around the concept of democracy. Placing Glissant's intellectual marronage in the field of democratic theory might at first appear as a particularly long stretch. Several aspects in the preceding sections have, however, pointed towards the feasibility and necessity of exploring this nexus. Not only have I begun formulating an argument about the inherent democratic and egalitarian thrust of Glissant's fictional world in my description of the fictional and non-fictional communities he created (chapter 4). Throughout my discussion of Neil Roberts' *Freedom as Marronage* and Isabel Lorey's ideas around the 'exodus of the multitude' my enquiry also repeatedly came across the imperative to *move further* in the critical endeavour of engaging with dominant political formats, especially by *creatively imagining alternatives* (5.1.). Even if the pursuit of this abstraction from Glissant's own work requires a stronger degree of improvisation and the taking of risks associated with trotting into unfamiliar territory (to Glissant himself), I have argued that Glissant's politics of relation, invites the pursuit of this line of enquiry. In line with how his work of fiction calls onto the reader to become part of the imaginary community his literary work created (4.2.2.), his work at large insinuates that it is not enough to analytically subtract a political model out of his own philosophy of relation, or any philosophy for that matter. Instead, the appeal to *imagine a politics of relation*, as a practice that requires constant renewal and inspiration from a poetic world-view is a central thrust of his philosophy. Against this background, engaging with general ideas about democracy,⁴⁶² and more specifically with the form of liberal democracies as the most dominant type,⁴⁶³ is not out of scope for Glissantian political

461 “the tormented attempts at democracy, if it can really be called direct, they all try to achieve that, at the depths of being, or Relation, there is an agreement about borders, about passages, the difficulty of our poetics is first to find these passages and then knowing how to navigate them”, my translation.

462 As one of the most valued and vaguest of political concepts, democracy is derived from the Greek words *demos* ('the people') and *kratos* ('strength'). “By itself democracy means little more than that, in some unde fined sense, political power is ultimately in the hands of the whole adult population, and that no smaller group has the right to rule” (Robertson 2003, 136).

463 Liberal democracy is usually understood as a form of representative democracy that includes election of a small number of representatives by the whole electorate that is organised by political parties, who form a legislative assembly. As Robertson points out “The liberal aspect refers to a set of traditional values, drawn from the basic stock of civil rights and natural rights, which are seen as central to the political culture, and may indeed be enshrined in a constitution and protected by the courts” (Robertson 2003, 281-82).

thought. Whereas the previous sections were mainly dedicated to an interrogation of the forms and shapes of Glissant's communities, looking at their internal set-ups and forms of governance signifies a step from an engagement with the external relations (borders) to the internal relations making up Glissant's 'relation-nations'.

Maintaining the overall argument that Glissant's politics of relation took the form of an intellectual movement of marronage in this context no longer refers to a political communities' *physical movement away*, such as I have discussed it in the first sub-sections of this chapter (5.1.), but above all to a *theoretical shift away from established political models*. In this section I will trace this movement by transitioning from an engagement with mainstream Western political theoretical ideas towards radical democratic positions and debates in the context of African political theory. The inspiration behind this line of enquiry is not only based on the belief that the governmental systems in Western nation-states cannot be regarded as (close to) perfect, and thus ready to be exported across the world, a belief that undergirds classical modernisation theory. From politically left and liberal perspectives, it is also backed by rising skepticism in the Western nation-states towards the majoritarian democratic model following the rise to power of overtly racist political leaders in Europe and the US, of which the electoral victories of Donald Trump and the Brexit referendum stand as the most powerful symbols. In this sense, the line of work pursued in this section contributes to ongoing attempts to formulate postcolonial responses to the 'crisis of democracy'. Whereas postcolonial perspectives on democracy have already cast a critical light on the complex historic entanglements of modern democracy and liberalism with slavery,⁴⁶⁴ my intention in the ensuing sections is to contribute to efforts towards providing 'impulses for the 'democratisation of democracy' and a 'pluralisation of democratic theories' (Ehrmann 2019).

The structure of this section proceeds from an outline of the main contours of Glissant's democratic thought to a conversation between his conception of democracy and several key debates in mainstream Western democratic theory with the aim of further concretising the contours and specificities of Glissant's take on democracy on an abstract theoretical level. This work allows me to place this aspect of Glissant's abstract political thought in relation to radical democratic theory (5.4.1.), African debates around a consensus-based democracy (5.4.2.), and the Zapatista movement as a concrete political movement that has been associated with key characteristics of Glissant's philosophy of relation in the work of John Drabinski (5.4.3.).

⁴⁶⁴See for instance Achille Mbembe's arguments about the inseparability of the development of democracy and slavery in the American Revolution in *Critique de la raison nègre* (2015, 124-25).

A Democratic Imagination of Relation – The Main Contours of Glissant's Thoughts On Democracy

Apart from what I have described as the essential democratic thrust of Glissant's fictional work and style of writing in this thesis so far (4.2.), the passages in Glissant's work where he overtly engaged with democracy as an institutional model or political theoretical object of debate are few and far in between. Following on from the portrayal of an initial enthusiasm about the potential of the 1948 elections in Martinique to bring about a radical social transformation from the colonial status quo in the plot of *La Lézarde* (1958), an initiative in which Glissant was personally involved (3.3.1.), a subsequent pessimism about the democratic process, especially pertaining Martinique, takes over in his fictional and non-textual engagements. The beginning of this skepticism is already alluded to in the second part of *La Lézarde*, where Mycéa dismisses the local elections – that in the real-world brought Aimé Césaire to power as the mayor of Fort-de-France and delegate to the French senate – as 'ballot-box-politics'⁴⁶⁵ (LL 150). This disenchantment with the emancipatory potentials of liberal democracy should, however, not be confused with a disinterest in questions pertaining to democracy as a political form, as an example of which I have mentioned his fictional treatment of the pre-colonial African polis of Onkolo in the novel *Sartorius* (1999) (4.3.2.). Instead of developing an argument against the formal political set-up in which Martinique was placed as a French Department, Glissant made the case in *Le discours antillais* that a work of conscientisation had to precede this work as a pre-requisite for an actual political process of deliberation in Martinique to take place. On a personal level, it is also noteworthy that despite his strong commitment to the political development of his island, Glissant never opted to be formally involved in local politics (3.3.). Despite his widely publicised opposition to Césaire, he never sought to contest his local government and his *Parti Progressiste Martiniquais* in the established framework of democratic elections by establishing an opposition party. Instead, his political activism, here understood in a conventional sense, took place *outside the official democratic framework*, namely in the form of a social movement, the *Front des Antillais et Guyanais pour l'Autonomie*, and several interventions in the spheres of culture and education, such as the establishment of the *Institut martiniquais d'études* (3.3.2.), theatre plays and the books he published – all of which were directly or indirectly critical of the government and the overall structures in which it operated.

Due to the scarcity of Glissant's direct engagements with the concept of democracy, I do not want to make a claim for a genuine *Glissantian theory of democracy*, that seeks to explain how different democratic institutions come into being or can be normatively evaluated. I would rather

⁴⁶⁵ Asked whether she voted or not Mycéa responds: “*Non. A vrai dire, je suis contre toute cette politique du bulletins. Et le fond, l'âme, la nécessité?*” (No, to be honest, I am against all this ballot-box-politics. And the principle? The soul? The necessity?“, my translation.

like to explore what I consider a *Glissantian democratic thought*, which is less based on overt statements, as much as it is based on what I perceive to be the general democratic thrust of his work. That being said, among the dispersed thoughts on democracy in Glissant's oeuvre, a passage in the *One World in Relation* (2009) documentary by Manthia Diawara serves as a particularly useful point of departure for the directions I will explore in the following sub-sections. In this part of the film Glissant said:

“Je crois que la démocratie est une des formes les plus achevées des recherches occidentales, mais la démocratie s'est quelque peu formalisée et figée dans toute cette histoire et on a eu tendance souvent à prendre l'apparence de la démocratie pour la réalité de la démocratie. Ce qui fait qu'il n'a pas été étonnant que des pays démocratiques ait pu se livrer à des agressions colonialistes, ce qui est une contradiction dans les termes, un pays démocratique ne devrait pas pouvoir être un pays colonialiste or les pays démocratiques d'Europe, l'Angleterre, la France ont été les plus grands colonialistes qui se trouvent, et par conséquent il y a encore quelque chose à quoi il faut réfléchir [...] et ceci est compliqué par le fait que dans leur lutte pour leur libération les pays anciennement colonisés sont pratiquement obligés de passer par la revendication de la démocratie pour arriver à se sortir de leur situation. Mais ce n'est pas certain qu'il n'y ait pas d'autres systèmes disons aussi valables, n'est-ce pas, et qui puissent permettre un progrès, on ne peut pas le dire maintenant, mais on ne peut pas non-plus dire que la démocratie c'est l'Absolu de la recherche de la liberté dans le monde”⁴⁶⁶.

Several aspects from this long quote are particularly instructive for the ensuing discussion. As becomes apparent from the opening lines, Glissant did not reject the idea of democracy *per se*. Quickly following his acknowledgement that the democratic model is among the most 'accomplished' outcomes of 'Western (re)search' he went on to distinguish between a 'real democratic system' and a 'democratic system by appearance'. This idealised belief in a 'real democracy' is lent even greater emphasis when he categorically stated that a 'colonising democracy' would be a contradiction in terms. From a formal standpoint, this assertion – which Glissant made with particular reference to the history of the colonising enterprises of European democracies of France and Great Britain – appears both startling and, at the same time, consciously or unconsciously refutes a central pillar of the 'democratic peace theory' as it emerged out of the field of International Relations, based in part on Kant's essay *Perpetual Peace* written in 1795. In a nutshell, this theory upholds that democracies do not engage in wars with other democracies (Roth 2017, 160). Despite the numerous criticisms this theory has attracted on both theoretical and

⁴⁶⁶“I believe that democracy is one of the most sophisticated political forms that have emerged from the Western tradition, but democracy has become somewhat formalised and frozen in all this history and we have often tended to mistake the appearance of democracy for the reality of democracy. So it was not surprising that democratic countries engaged in colonialist aggression, which is a contradiction in terms, a democratic country should not be able to be a colonialist country. But the democratic countries of Europe, England, France were the greatest colonialists of all. So there is still something to think about [...] and this is complicated by the fact that in their struggle for liberation the formerly colonised countries are practically forced to demand democracy in order to get out of their situation. But this does not mean that there are no other systems that are as valid, isn't it, and which would enable a certain progress, we cannot say it now, but we neither can we say that democracy is the Absolute goal of the search for freedom in the world”, my translation.

empirical grounds, it remains an influential idea with strong geopolitical implications, and one that has been put forward as justifications of war by US-presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. By positing another criteria for a democratic system, namely the lack of imperial expansionism, Glissant proposed a different perspective from which both national political systems and international relations can be viewed. I would argue that this perspective is both informed by the experience of those subjected to the colonial violence issues *in the name of democracy*, and informed by the belief in the importance of what lies underneath the level of formal political structures, namely political *cultures* that are either aggressive and predatory towards their surroundings, or democratic in the sense of treating other political communities in an egalitarian fashion. In the above quote, Glissant continued his line of thought on the democratic model, in the prevalent liberal form, by adding that the geopolitical situation is becoming increasingly complicated in a scenario where former colonial countries have been (and still are) practically obliged to endorse democratic systems as a pre-requisite of becoming independent from (neo)colonial powers. In the history of decolonisation, this democratic argument has been made strong by several political leaders against the rule of an exogenous minority over an indigenous majority. For Glissant, this neat adoption of the liberal electoral democratic model led to a host of problems that derive from a historically and culturally insensitive adoptions of foreign governance templates that have been introduced by local and external elites who considered this 'external model' superior to indigenous political models.

In addition to a *critical* strand of Glissantian thinking about democracy, the quote also contains two clues leading in the direction of the exploration of possible *alternatives* to the prevalent democratic forms of governance as championed by Western nation-states. The first relates to what Glissant bemoans as an excessive formalisation or 'clotted' nature of the democratic idea, and the second refers to the belief that there, and I am paraphrasing his words, 'might be other systems that are just as valid and might lead to a progress in democracy'. In addition to this quote, similar arguments can be found in a passage in Glissant's *Mémoire des esclavages* (2007) (2.3.), where he argued that

*“Que peut-être ces avancées de la démocratie ont pourtant laissé les individus (les personnes), et le collectivités, infirmes de l'imaginaire, c'est-à-dire qu'elles not pas su les ouvrir à leur propre imaginaire de la Relation, ni les convier aux imaginaires des autres, à la liberté des autres, c'est-à-dire encore, du monde alentour”*⁴⁶⁷ (ME 133).

Referring back to the previous argument about the paradoxical nature of 'colonial democracies', which historically ran parallel to the alleged perfection of the democratic models, he

⁴⁶⁷“Despite the progress brought about by democracy, it has left individuals (persons) and collectivities crippled in the imaginary, which is to say that they have neither managed to open to their own imaginary of Relation, nor did they invite themselves into the imaginary of others, to the freedom of others, which is to say the world around them”, my translation.

identifies a 'terrible lack' (ME 133) in the Western democratic project which he, again, measured according to the ability of communities to develop a worldly and relational imaginary. With regards to arguments presented in the previous quote, he added the importance of *the 'imaginaire de l'autre'* (an *other* imaginary), running counter a pursuit of an exclusive and self-centred 'national interest' or the practice of wars of expansion. What he called an “*imaginaire démocratique de la Relation*” (democratic imaginary of Relation) (ME 134) is thus opposed to a highly individualised ontology that leaves a political community the 'freedom' to act only in its own interest: “*L'ontologie nous laisse dangereusement libres de regarder ailleurs, d'agir dans notre seul sens, quand l'imaginaire nous a déjà changés, demeurant tels cependant*”⁴⁶⁸ (ME 134).

The relational ontology at the basis of Relation, which can partly be associated with concepts such as *ubuntu*, Jean-Luc Nancy's *being-in-common* (4.1.1.), and Paul Gilroy's convivialism (5.2.), with which I have engaged in passing, is here translated from an interpersonal to a collective realm. In analogy to a relational way of being that 'changes by exchanging with others', the collectives Glissant thought of as 'relation-nations' also privilege mutually beneficial interactions on egalitarian grounds with other communities. For Glissant, democratic relations thus play a role both with regards to the *external* as well as *internal* set-up of communities.

As alluded by the quote taken from Diawara's film, while Glissant held onto the democratic idea in principle, he also insisted that there might be 'truer' and 'less fixed' expressions relying more strongly on the cultivation of a relational imaginary than the dominant liberal electoral models. This leads to two questions: What does it mean to be truly democratic in Glissant's view? And what other political models could be imagined in place of the dominant liberal democratic model? As the two passages in which Glissant directly engaged with the notion of democracy indicate, at stake at this abstract level is not (perhaps no longer) the issue of a democratisation of Martinique, but a general concern in the reconsideration of political models for postcolonial communities – that were forced to adapt democratic models as part of the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the World Bank in the 1970s and 1980s – as well as for the Western nation-states that have been tasked with exporting their model of democracy, a practice Glissant ridiculed as the “*le devoir d'intervenir dans le monde pour ici et là corriger les excès de barbarie de peuples non avancés sur le chemin de cette démocratie*”⁴⁶⁹ (ME 132). Based on this preliminary survey of Glissant's ideas on democracy, decolonising democracy with Glissant's politics of relation could thus be understood in the multiple senses of a call for the revitalisation of a frozen democratic practices, the conceptual broadening of the notion of democratic culture to include internal and external relations of political communities,

468“ontology leaves us dangerously free to look elsewhere, to act in our own sense, when the imaginary has already changed us, while remaining the same”, my translation.

469“the imperative to intervene in the world to here and there correct the excess of barbarity of underdeveloped people on the path to this democracy”, my translation.

and the exploration of other democratic traditions outside the Western genealogy instead of a blind adaptation of institutional templates that are incompatible with the cultural differences of the world.

As I demonstrated in these preliminary observations, the democratic dimension of Glissant's politics can be traced across his political archive. The following sub-section seeks to formulate responses to the questions posed above by consulting these aspects of Glissant's political archive by setting his work in relation to a selection of main points of contention in Western democratic thought, as they have been associated with the radical democratic tradition (5.4.1.). The argument I will put forward in this context holds that, while sharing a commitment to rethink direct forms of democracy, Glissant's politics maintains a more pronounced interest in the interrogation of concrete institutional models than key proponents of the Western radical democratic tradition. As part of an exploration of the form these alternative models could take, I will suggest that an interrogation of debates on African democratic models (5.4.2.) as well as a juxtaposition of Glissant's abstract ideas on democracy and the concrete case of the Zapatista movement can be deemed productive (5.4.3.).

5.4.1. From the Greek Polis Towards Creole Democratic Cultures – Glissant's Democratic Thought and Radical Democratic Theory

Radical democratic theory is not a coherent intellectual tradition but rather a set of dispersed theoretical positions sharing a set of characteristics that set it apart from the mainstream of Western democratic thought (Comtesse et al. 2019). Among the thinkers that feature in this canon, as proposed by Comtesse et al., the names of Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Benjamin Barber, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Jean-Luc Nancy and Jacques Rancière have already been mentioned in the course of this thesis. Instead of taking the institutionalised form of representational democracy as the outcome of an evolution from ancient Greece to the EU as normative institutional standard, these theorists share a commitment to more radical ideas of freedom and equality as essential democratic ideals (Comtesse et al. 2019, 11). Due to a skepticism against the uncritical celebration of the achievements of representative democracies, the emancipatory ambition of radical democratic theories is intimately linked to the debate concerning the conceptual difference between politics and the political (1.2.). By referring to a *deeper*, more *profound* or *egalitarian* notion of democracy as the one practiced in constitutional democracies today, these positions open up the normative debate on how political communities *should* be set up. Comtesse et al. identify several commonalities among theorists that can be identified as belonging to, or as having been instrumental for the formation of this intellectual tradition. Among them are the call for a greater *intensity* of democracy that transcends all parts of society, a *post-essentialist* understanding of social orders, and the *contingency of democracy* as a social form requiring continuous re-invention itself in order to be maintained (12-14). As I will show in the following, Glissant's oeuvre relates to these

aspects in several ways that I will outline by, firstly, discussing Glissant's call for a greater inclusivity of democratic political debates to include alternative epistemologies, and secondly, pointing out the democratic implications of the abstract notion of the 'small country' as a political form that potentially provides the framework for more direct and relational forms of democracy.

The Poet's Expulsion from the Polis and its Aftermath – The Case for Radical Inclusivity

Students of democratic theory are usually presented with a founding narrative dating back to ancient Greece in the 5th century BCE, a point in time credited with the 'invention of direct democracy' (Roth 2017, 17).⁴⁷⁰ As has been well documented, the democratic political communities of ancient Greece were essentially based on the separation between the spheres of *oikos* and *polis*, the former defined as the domain concerning private matters of the family and the latter concerning the public domain of the city. Whereas the private realm was considered a 'pre-political' sphere in which the male head of the household could rule despotically over his women, children and slaves, the polis, which was exclusively reserved for free male adult citizens and thus categorically excluded slaves, strangers (*metics*) and women, was egalitarian in nature and the place where political decisions concerning the city were taken during general assemblies (17-18). The historical exclusion of foreigners, women and slaves from the Greek polis has been taken up by several critics of Western democracy and its genealogy as indicating a set of inherent deficits in representation, and as the precursor for the ongoing systematic inequalities, if not outright exclusion or oppression of the same social groups from political power organised in contemporary nation-states.

In his take on the alleged 'invention' of Western democratic theory and its two and a half thousand years old history, Glissant made the case in a talk titled *Images de l'Etre, Lieux de l'Imaginaire* (2006),⁴⁷¹ that for him, ancient Greek political thought was above all marked by Plato's expulsion of the poets. As Laura Liliana Gómez Espíndola points out, Plato, who considered poetry alongside music and gymnastics as an important tool to educate 'harmonious virtuous souls' that were important for the maintenance of the city state, took a categorical stance against any innovation in the laws of these classical established fields: "When lawlessness has established itself there [in music and poetry], it flows over little and little into characters and ways of life [...] until in the end it overthrows everything, public and private" (quoted in Espíndola 2016:,43). Plato here drew a remarkable connection between stylistic transformation in the literary field and political institutions that find an echo in Benedict Anderson's arguments about the politics of form (4.4.1.). More importantly, he claimed that poets who "produced without knowledge of the truth" and were

470 The ensuing narrative is usually told in teleological fashion in which democratic thought evolves from less to highly developed democratic thought, brushing over what is cast as gaps and bumps on the pathway to the representative democratic systems of governance in the West that are capable of being exported to the Non-West as 'best-practice-models'. The critique of this discourse of political theory has begun in postcolonial and decolonial studies, but in my view still deserves greater consideration.

471 The essay was later republished in Glissant's *Une nouvelle region du monde* (2007).

only concerned with imitating appearances, had to be banished from political affairs because they:

“know nothing about human virtue and they do not have any idea about how to organize a city. The most important proof for that is that having this kind of knowledge would have allowed them to be good educators of their fellow citizens improving their ways of life; they would have been able to propose good political legislation as Lycurgus did; their cities could have won a war under their instruction. However, the fact is that none of these things happened” (quoted in Espíndola, 45).

Plato's judgement about the political capacities of poets was thus not made on collective grounds but concerned a specific kind of poetry. For Glissant, who was less concerned with the specific context of this banishment than with its larger symbolic dimension and epistemological repercussions, this exclusion was highly significant for the Western democratic tradition in which Plato, his general anti-democratic stance notwithstanding, is conventionally referred to as the first in a canonical genealogy that was developed further by Aristotle. Glissant, in that regard, joined Rancière who took issue with Plato's legitimisation of the right to rule of 'those who know over those who don't know' against which he developed his radically egalitarian approach to politics in which no one can claim the legitimate right to rule (Abbas 2019, 389).

Although Glissant did not make the repercussions of this historical exclusion more explicit in his talk, on an abstract level, Glissant considered it be the most fundamental of all political exclusions, because, for him, it constituted the basis for what would later be conceptualised as 'pure reason' and modern scientific thought as it would later be associated with the work of Aristotle (UNRDM 177). According to Glissant, Plato's decision was based on the belief that poets were prone to 'fall for the obscurities of myths and the legends of beginning' (UNRDM 177), and that their social roles were better confined to the expression of feelings. For Glissant, the exclusion of the poets from political decision-making and from the production of knowledge has to be considered as part of the same political move. In fact, a central strand of Glissant's politics of relation can be considered as an initiative to counter this claim by *reinscribing poetics into the production of knowledge and into the domain of politics*. As I have outlined in the introduction with regards to Glissant's conceptualisation of the poet and Glissant's approach to knowledge more generally (1.2.3.), the insistence on reclaiming a central position for poets in the polis goes beyond the consideration of 'affects' and 'emotions' for the political and democracy. Instead, the political implications of a poetics was intricately associated with worldliness and a commitment to bridge the binary between 'affect' and 'reason' that, for him, was at the basis of the Western democratic tradition.

For Glissant, the expulsion of the poets was thus based on epistemological considerations that can be directly linked to ontological considerations about human nature. Both have serious political consequences that can be traced right into the contemporary political moment. Glissant

connects the concept of 'pure reason' in Western philosophy, as the definitive criteria for a complete degree of humanity with a conception of being that is fixed and singular (*être*) (UNRDM 178). To this individualist ontology, which was famously expressed by Descartes in the phrase "I think therefore I am", he opposed the notion of a more fluid and variable state of being which he termed *étant*, as a way of acknowledging that the conception of what it means to be human varies according to different cultures, and can be seen as inherently related to the existence of others (UNRDM 179).

From a Glissantian perspective, these fundamental philosophical differences have immediate implications for the constitution of political communities, conceptions of identity, and of the borders political communities erect, as Glissant continued to discuss in the same essay and which I have discussed in the previous sections. Instead of basing his position vis-à-vis the Western democratic tradition on the empiric exclusion, subjugation and exploitation of women, foreigners and slaves, Glissant's political project thus diverts from the Western tradition of democratic thought at the very moment where it delegitimised a particular way of thinking as irrational and not fit for political deliberation. Put more clearly, positing the abstract figure of the poet as 'the most oppressed', or the 'most excluded' subject of Western modernity, Glissant shifts the grounds for critique from *identitarian* positions traditionally tied to the social constructs of race, gender or ethnicity to *epistemological* grounds where different ways of being and knowing need to be acknowledged as fully belonging to humanity as a first step towards thinking about different political institutional set-ups.⁴⁷²

In a more literal fashion, these abstract political ideas concerning the role of the poet in the polis can also be linked to Glissant's organisational political work. It can, for instance, be seen as playing a role in his collaboration with the French state (2.3.3.), or in his engagement for the *International Parliament of Writers* (IPW) in that respect (4.4.2.). Seen through the angle of democratic theory, the IPW is a concretisation of the abstract idea of a 'parliament of poets'. Constituted as a parallel structure underneath, across and above the established a political system, the IPW could be seen as the historical result of the exclusion of poets from regular political deliberations. Next to the call for radical equality among the members of a political community, at stake with this dimension of Glissant's democratic thought is thus an insistence on the equality of different modes of knowing and different rationalities.

Small Countries as the Spatial Scope for More Direct and Relational Forms of Democracy

Another strand of discussion in Western democratic thought that can be brought into conversation with Glissant's work, concerns the spatial and formal set-up of political communities, some of which I have already mentioned above with regards to the model of the 'small country' and

⁴⁷²This move is not novel, nor is it exclusive to Glissant. My aim here is to position Glissant in relation to the tradition of Western democratic thought.

the island as part of a global archipelagic arrangement (5.3.2.). As historians of political ideas have pointed out, the different versions of the Greek polis were spatially limited and comprised on average roughly ten thousand inhabitants on a territory as large as 2500 square kilometres. It thus afforded its citizens the potential of knowing or seeing each other, a characteristic it interestingly shares with the island and population of Martinique. In theory, this small geography accords a political community the possibility for relative intense democratic engagement in line with Glissant's depiction of the palaver in Onkolo (SAT 32), an intensity that is arguably in contrast to the 'frozen' character of Western democracy critiqued by Glissant.

An ongoing debate about the practicality of more intense or direct forms of democracy in states occupying larger territories has ensued from this formal limitation. Defined in contrast to representational forms of democracy, direct democracy refers to a set-up where “all concerned citizens must directly participate in the making of decisions and the passing of laws, and this function can neither be delegated to others, nor can it be carried out by others chosen to represent their interests of the many“ (Robertson 2002, 148). For Glissant the issue of representation has been an important one as well. In the literary realm, he has repeatedly emphasised that he did not write *in place* or *for* someone else. He did not *represent* the cause of the Martinicans, neither to the world, nor to themselves. Instead, his repeated insistence that his political project had to be taken up collectively by 'the people as a whole' (see 1.2.3., 3.2.3., 4.1.2.) refers back to the necessity of a consensus and a kind of unity he perceived to be essential for the political actions he proposed. In an institutional sense, Comtesse et al. note that Benjamin Barber's suggestion of 'strong democracy' in the 1980s signalled the beginning of more recent attempts to revitalise democratic cultures away from the imperative of representation:

“Strong democracy is defined as a politics of citizen participation: it is literally self-governance by citizens, no representative government that acts on behalf of citizens. Active citizens govern themselves in a direct manner, this does not necessarily have to happen at all levels and at all times, but sufficiently frequently and especially in cases when fundamental measures are being decided and a large degree of power is being exercised“⁴⁷³ (Buchstein and Pohl 2017, 281).

Barber's suggestions concerning the progressive potential of governance at the level of the city were mentioned in the context of my presentation of Glissant's engagement for the IPW in 4.4.2. and is based on a generally optimistic outlook on the capacities of larger assemblies to arrive at informed decisions (285). Particular emphasis in Barber's work is thus placed on notions such as acting, process, self-legislation, creating communities and transformation. In Barber's view, “strong

⁴⁷³ “Starke Demokratie ist durch eine Politik der Bürgerbeteiligung definiert: sie ist buchstäblich die Selbstregierung der Bürger, keine stellvertretende Regierung, die im Namen der Bürger handelt. Tätige Bürger regieren sich unmittelbar selbst, nicht notwendigerweise auf jeder Ebene und jederzeit, aber ausreichend häufig und insbesondere dann, wenn über grundlegende Maßnahmen entschieden und bedeutende Macht entfaltet wird), my translation.

democracy: transforms dissensus, turns disagreements into an occasion for reciprocity and private interests into a theoretical tool to think about the collective”⁴⁷⁴ (quoted in Buchstein and Pohl, 282). The communities he has in mind are thus *political* in the sense that they are created out of the active participation and interaction of citizens, and do not require any axiomatic consensus or homogeneity of its members.⁴⁷⁵ Judging from Glissant's critique of the 'frozen' nature of the Western democratic tradition, and his shared belief in the potential of the city as a space in which a higher intensity of democratic engagement is practically possible, it is noteworthy that, on a formal level, Glissant's democratic thought carries surprising affinities with Barber's call for a stronger, more intense form democracy.

Another dimension of the intensification of democratic culture called for by Glissant's is his aforementioned criteria for 'true democracies' to be non-aggressive towards their neighbours. Glissant's challenge to reserve the status of democracies to non-aggressive political communities implies that a democratic political culture has to pervade all aspects of society and cannot be confined to the community's internal configuration alone. If this line of thought is taken further, Glissant's democratic thought points into a different direction than the abstract figure of autonomous, sovereign and singular beings, which Glissant perceived to be based on a problematic anthropomorphic idea that conceives political communities metaphorically as “whole humans”.⁴⁷⁶ Instead of assuming the analogy of individual human bodies and larger political collectives to be relevant, Glissantian democratic thought is thus interested in more fragmented, open or pluralistic notions of community (4.2.2.), that are permeable (5.2.3.), and function in the manner of networks (4.4.), rather than as autonomous sovereign autonomous subjects (4.1.2.).

Differences from Radical Democracy

Their reluctance, or outright hostility, towards systematic attempts of building political models, a trait I have also identified in the context of my discussion of the works of Rancière and Nancy, has been identified as a common trait among radical democratic theories (Comtesse et al. 2019, 464). The skepticism against *fixing* or *recommending* concrete political models thus tends to set these thinkers at odds with the dominant thrust of political science, sociology and political philosophy, and arguably brings them closer to literary and poetic engagements with the idea of democracy, such as the ones outlined in the case of Glissant. Through Rancière's privileging of the notions of equality and dissensus as being of fundamental importance for democracy and the

⁴⁷⁴“strong democracy: transformiert Uneinigkeit, macht aus Meinungsverschiedenheiten einen Anstoß zu Gegenseitigkeit und aus privaten Interessen ein erkenntnistheoretisches Werkzeug des öffentlichen Überlegens”, my translation.

⁴⁷⁵Comtesse et al. attribute the reasons why Barber's ideas have not received the same degree of attention in recent scholarly work on radical democracy, due to Barber's unproblematised understanding of a singular and naturalised sense of 'rationality' of citizens (2019, 470).

⁴⁷⁶This conception can be found both in Plato's anti-democratic thought, but has been updated and transformed in the (equally anti-democratic) work of Thomas Hobbes' and the figure of the Leviathan, which has been considered an influential basis for modern social contract theories – both of which are constitutive for classical debates in liberal democratic theories (Roth 2017, 39).

political, the two notions turn out to be synonymous in his work (Abbas 2019, 395). Since the 'police' is essentially invested in upholding social hierarchies and inequalities, dissensus is by definition taking the side for equality and thereby democracy (391). The rejection of the logic of the police and its right to rule, results for Rancière in the anarchist proposition that there can be no legitimate rule (396). A consequence of this principled stance is that it becomes impossible to institutionalise or stabilise democracy, and that the idea of a representative democracy turns into an oxymoron. At its core, democracy thus remains a radical, subversive, ungovernable movement that cannot be fixed into a form of governance or society (397). Whereas Glissant's 'literary democracy' can in certain instances be read as sharing this reservation against finding a fixed form of governance and established modes of representation, particularly considering the radical openness created through his use of 'collective narrative voice' (4.2.2.), several elements of his democratic thought and extra-textual organisational practice suggest that his approach was less principled and more open towards pragmatic considerations involving aspects of hierarchies and authority.

The kind of *mise-en-relation* (linking) of key concerns in the radical Western democratic thought and Glissant's democratic imaginary has further clarified the contours of the democratic dimensions of his political thought. Its basic egalitarian and inclusive thrust, its emphasis on a strong and direct democratic culture and its aversion to binary oppositions have pointed towards several shared concerns with radical democratic theorists. In the following sub-section I will argue that the, above mentioned, needs to consider alternative democratic traditions, along with a heightened importance placed on non-exclusionary internal and external relations, as well as the progressive potentials of consensus-based processes can be interpreted as pointing towards an interrogation of African political models, a notion that has appeared in the preceding sections (5.2.).

5.4.2. Glissant and African Debates On Democracy

The preceding discussion has highlighted some of the commonalities and differences between Glissant's democratic thought and the Western radical democratic tradition. This line of study was useful in that it demonstrated that Glissant shares several key concerns with this tradition and yet diverts from it, particularly with regards to the need to *actively imagine alternative political models and institutions*. In that sense it reiterated the key distinctions with regards to Glissant's conception of the political (1.2.3.) and community (4.1.21) as they have been discussed in conversation with the tradition of French poststructuralism and the black radical tradition. Bearing in mind that one of my arguments in this chapter is that the general movement of Glissant's political thought invites the pursuit of a *theoretical marronage away* from the Western democratic archive and its dominant configurations, I would like to further pursue this argument by suggesting that this

type of epistemological flight is directed towards what could be called an African model of democracy or an African political archive in line with Achille Mbembe's (2018) arguments pertaining to African conceptions of borders and communities mentioned in the previous sections.

Bringing Glissant in conversation with the African political archive, as I set out to do in the following, is based on my proposition that Glissant's work as a whole suggests the necessity of reconnecting Western political thought with African epistemologies, thus not as a physical *retour* but as an imaginary return that would provide the epistemological foundations for new kinds of community. To posit Africa as Glissant's democratic theoretical point of reference, moreover suggests itself bearing in mind the central position of the palaver in the ancient fictional town of *Onkolo* in the novel *Sartorius* (1999) (4.3.1.), and the prevalence of African political ideas among historical maroon communities (2.1.3.). Additionally, one could also point out a general shift in Glissant's fictional work from his earlier novels that are set in the Caribbean (LL, LQS, LCDC) to novels that are located in a global and, to a large extent, African contexts (TM, SAT). On a biographical level, I have also pointed out that Glissant himself referred to his work for the *Société africaine de culture* (SAC) as the 'political school' that formed his views in fundamental ways (Couffon and Glissant 2001). Generationally, the SAC and Glissant's intellectual formation, took place against the backdrop of Pan-African cultural festivals, such as the *First Congress of Black Writers and Artists* in Paris 1956, which, form part of a larger tradition of Pan-African Congresses launched by W.E.B. Du Bois in 1900, and reached up into the series of cultural festivals that took place in the 1970s, such as the CARIFESTAs Glissant participated in (3.3.2.). As I have explained before, placing Glissant in this tradition, and emphasising his connection to African philosophies is, again, not meant to exclude the presence of the diverse currents of political thought that converged in the Caribbean, nor is it meant as a way of disavowing the existence of the Caribbean as possessing a political archive in its own right. Instead, the intent is to trace and make visible systematically disavowed relations between traditions of thought in the spirit of Glissant's relational philosophy. Glissant's work, in this sense, encourages a countering of this theoretical neglect and an encouragement to re-discover a political archive that has been negated by the colonial enterprise, but that has not been lost in the course of the last 500 years of coloniality. After I have already alluded to the particularity of African institutional political forms in the context of my arguments pertaining to Mbembe's *Tanner Lectures* (2018) (5.2.1.), I will now propose several lines that could be pursued with regards to an understanding of democracy modelled on the African political archive, a discursive construct I borrow from Mbembe. This discussion will be grouped around two aspects, firstly the institution of the palaver and its orientation towards consensus, and secondly the view of the human at the basis of African democratic thought and its consequences for Glissant's

proposition for what he called the divisive or 'hard line' of a politics of relation as a new foundational axiom for a democratic imaginary of relation.

Democracy of Palaver – Striving Towards Consensus and the Development of a Democratic Culture

Without claiming to provide a comprehensive overview of the debate on democracy from African political theoretical perspectives, I will in the following single out a few of the main ideas that can be brought into conversation with Glissant's democratic thought and the Western radical democratic tradition outlined above. The debate on the appropriate governmental systems for African states gained renewed urgency following what is known as the wave of African democratisation in the 1990s. After a period in which the socio-economic problems of African countries were mainly attributed to authoritarian single-party regimes that had outlasted the time of independence with neocolonial support from European and US-American governments, the introduction of multi-party politics in several countries did not bring about the desired results. Instead, elections were frequently manipulated and turned into occasions for the eruption of violence between sub-national communities. Against this backdrop, several African intellectuals argued for a re-consideration of the African cultural archive as the basis for a modern political system that would be apt at dealing with the diversity of the African people and thus bypass some of the issues that a neat adaption of Western democratic model of representative democracy and governments formed by the majority party did not manage to solve (in the best of cases) or even spark (in the worst of cases).

In a frequently cited essay, Kwasi Wiredu (2000) put forward the argument that, in contrast to postcolonial democratic systems based on the mechanism of elected majorities and minorities, precolonial African societies arrived at political decisions through a consensus. Largely basing his claims on the historic case of the Ashanti Kingdom, spanning the region of today's Ghana and Ivory Coast, he argues that the process of an election was a foreign concept in the local Akan language. Instead of presuming that the views held within the kingdom were opposed to each other or irreconcilable, the belief in the necessity of consensus was based on the axiomatic belief that, in the end, all interests of members of the community diverged, even if their current perceptions differed. Instead of promoting the establishment of parties that compete in national elections, Wiredu thus referred to precolonial Ashanti Kingdom as a model in which male (and in certain cases female) representatives of family lineages were delegated to discuss the matter of the community, which meant that political authority was based on age, wisdom and diplomatic skill on the part of the representatives. Although Akan society at large took the form of a monarchy, and the King's legitimacy was derived from the gods or the ancestors, his or her responsibility was to ensure that a

consensus could be found among stronger and weaker parts of the community, so as to avoid that a minority group would be repeatedly dissatisfied, a criteria for 'good governance' that forced the king to acquire a particular political skill set. Wiredu's argument is thus mainly constructed in opposition to the prevalent model of 'democracies of competition' pitting a majority against a minority (Diagne 2016, 75).

In Wiredu's view, 'majoritarian democracies' are characterised by parties and alliances with similar tendencies and goals, harbouring the single goal of gaining or keeping power in a Machiavellian tradition, a perception that echoes some of the concerns associated with the intellectual current of 'post-democracy' in the West. Against the charge that his model upholds a naïve belief in a conflict-free precolonial African utopia, Wiredu acknowledged that Akan society was in fact far from ideal and that, while there was consensus based politics within an ethnic group, inter-ethnic relations were often shaped by conflict – the most extreme form of a negation of a consensus. Wiredu claims that a similar dynamic has been transported into African nation-states, which are generally composed of a multiplicity of political communities with long-standing rivalries – with explosive results. Based on these considerations, Wiredu makes the case for a 'non-party democracy', as a government not of parties but of representatives that are voted in power through consensus decision. The idea of voting is thus not completely discredited, but the government is formed by a coalition of citizens instead of a coalition of parties, so that the majority would not rule *over* but *with* the minority, convincing the minority to support its suggestions and to not just live with it, which he perceives to be the basic predicament of minorities in majority democracies.

Godefroy Bidima offered a similar argument to Wiredu when he proposed to rethink the African idea of palaver, which features prominently in Glissant's *Sartorius* (1999), so as to develop a 'local conception of justice' in which populations could recognise themselves and (re)constitute a genuine public space beyond the discourse on the democratic state that was to follow the neocolonial state (Diagne 2016, 74). In several instances, traditional African socio-political notions, such as *ubuntu* in South Africa's TRC and the 1994 constitution, or the *Gacaca*-Courts in Rwanda have been instrumentalised to this end. While the potential of these traditional concepts as offering effective alternatives to Western legal proceedings is generally viewed as positive – as is the move away from a singular focus on the state as a unit of analysis to the detriment of an acknowledgment of local forms of governance –, their detachment from the overall institutional setting in which they are placed, points to the relative weakness of these isolated measures.

In his rebuttal of Wiredu's belief in consensual democracy, and Bidima's proposition of traditional democratic forms, Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze questions the practicality of 'lineage based'

democracy for contemporary African societies as well as the basis for legitimacy of rulers (Eze 2015, 187). Despite its critical thrust, Eze's work could be seen as complementing Wiredu's point when he argues that “‘consensus’ or ‘unanimity’ regarding essential decisions [cannot be] the final end of democracy, but just one of its moments. I think that democracy as a political institution is an end in itself”⁴⁷⁷ (195). Eze goes on to clarify that democratic processes should not be defined by a consensus, but “by ensuring the means and the framework to include non-agreements and oppositional political activity, as an end in itself, as much as fostering a culture of agreement and consensus”⁴⁷⁸ (195). For Eze, the only consensus defining democracy should be the formal agreement to abide by the rules of democracy, namely the institutionalisation and respect of dissensus, as much as consensus (196). Souleymane Bachir Diagne tries to reconcile these two seemingly opposing views when he suggests that political parties should be forbidden to identify with a particular race, an ethnic group or a religion, as is already the case in the Senegalese constitution (2016, 76). Instead of re-discovering the traditions of palaver or consensus, he suggests to rather reinvent these models as a way of “addressing the important questions concerning the solidity and continuity of the initial social contract, prior to the choices of proper political orientation, in which the competition between values around which parties are formed is also just as necessary” (77).

At a basic level, the discussion around the political potentials of the palaver, consensus and an African democratic culture, refers to the need to create forms of governance that are culturally appropriate instead of neatly adopting universal Western political models. In their book *A New Paradigm for the African State – Fundi Wa Afrika* (2008), Mueni wa Muiu and Guy Martin reject theories of the African state that are based on the paradigms of modernization, dependency, or statism, and instead call for what they call a 'compatible cultural democracy' (7) or what they call a 'reconstructionist approach' based on the premise that “if the Japanese state reflects Japanese values, the American state American values, or the French state French values, why should African states not reflect African values? Are African values authoritarianism, conflict, corruption, dependency, disorder, hunger, and war?” (192).

Challenging the notion that African democratic institutions undergo an evolutionary process to become like European states, a view upheld by modernisation theory, Ina Kerner (2015) has also explored the potential of a cultural relativist perspective towards the Botswana historic experience with democracy through a reading of the work of Jean and John Comaroff in *Theory from the South*

477“‘Konsensus’ oder die ‘Einstimmigkeit’ wesentlicher Entscheidungen [können] nicht das letzte Ziel der Demokratie, sondern nur eines ihrer Momente sein. Ich denke, dass Demokratie als politische Institution ihren Zweck in sich selbst hat“, my translation.

478“die ordentliche Sicherstellung eines Mittels oder eines Rahmens um Nichtübereinstimmung und oppositionelle politische Aktivitäten einzubringen, zu kultivieren und aufrechtzuerhalten, die um ihrer selbst willen genährt und gepflegt werden, ebenso wie Zustimmung und Konsensus um ihrer selbst willen genährt und gepflegt werden“, my translation.

– *Or, How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa* (2012). Instead of viewing Botswana as a 'deficient' or 'low-intensity democracy she finds that the political culture of a deliberative democracy among the Setswana people, who form the majority national group in Botswana is, to some degree, incompatible with the conception of 'procedural democracy' as it is defined by elections, the changes of office, and mass public articulation (Kerner 2015, 52). The Comaroffs' claim that the political tradition has survived colonisation, and is based on complex checks and balances that limit the power of chiefs whose responsibility is to rule and represent the people. Their legitimacy was not unquestioned but was dependent on good governance and an intense consultative and participative process involving a vast set of social stakeholders (52).

Instead of measuring the 'maturity' based on allegedly objective criteria, the case of Botswana suggests that an intense culture of consultation and deliberation is of greater significance than periodic elections and regular changes in government. In line with Wiredu's arguments, multiparty-democracy appears as a 'contradiction in itself' that 'degrades democracy to an occasional act of voting' (53) in this context. One could thus read the Comaroff's work as a case for a single-party-system by shifting the democratic charge of deliberation and participation back into the everyday and the development of a democratic culture in which 'participatory politics is a part of everyday life' (54). Taking the culturally embedded notions of democratic politics seriously, thus implies not only that the export of Western democratic models needs to be questioned, it also implies that one revisits the process in which phenomena that are harmful to democratic processes have been externally caused through colonialism and neocolonial economic structures, such as the artificial construction of political borders and the destruction of local economies which effectively serve as the form and base for political communities (62).

By outlining these positions in the field of African debates on democracy my intention was less to engage with the specificities of each proposition and the complex socio-political context they respond to. Instead, I wanted to make a more general case for a consideration of alternative directions in which the main contours of Glissant's democratic thought point. Obviously operating on a less specific and empirically grounded basis as the positions proposed here, several characteristics of Glissant's political thought that were incompatible with the Western radical tradition, featured prominently in the discussion on African democracy. Among them is the need to actively create or invent forms of governance that are locally embedded and not imported from elsewhere. The potential of a political culture that is geared towards finding a consensus also emerged in these debates, as does the adherence to a kind of political authority that manages to unify a culturally diverse constituency. While one could claim that these abstract ideas are incoherent with the complexities of big nation-states, it is worthy to remember Glissant's claim

around the future of small countries as a political framework in which a more intense or more direct democratic political culture could be practiced. In the following I will offer another angle from which the African influence on Glissant's democratic thought can be approached by referring to the relational ontologies at the basis of African archive, as conceptualised in the work of Achille Mbembe.

Another Imaginary Basis – African Relational Ontologies and the Foundation of Glissant's Political Thought

As I demonstrated at the onset of this section, the world-view as well as the conception of the human and nonhuman, on which particular political communities was of greater importance for Glissant than the specific political techniques or models they employ. Although these two aspects cannot be completely separated from one another, as pointed out above, I will, in the following, pay closer attention to the kind of relational imagination Glissant envisioned to be necessary for 'truly' democratic communities. This harks back to Glissant's insistence that a colonising democracy is a contradiction in terms, a view which also implied that an internal egalitarianism should also be reflected externally, and that (in line with Glissant's border thought) a clear duality between inside-outside cannot be upheld. Put inversely, the most sophisticated and culturally specific political system can not prevent the perpetration of the most horrendous crimes against humanity when a political community harbours an 'anti-relational' imaginary, cutting itself off from other human communities and the natural world.

In this regard, it is once more, in the work of Mbembe that the clearest links between African political thought and Glissant's democratic imaginary can be found. In a chapter titled *La sortie de la démocratie* in his book *Politiques de l'inimitié* (2016), Mbembe argues that a rethinking of democracy as a 'community of life' has to begin with an interrogation of the conceptions of the human and the world-view at the basis of any political practice. In this endeavour Mbembe directly refers to Glissant's notion of the Tout-Monde when he writes about his project that “*il ne peut y avoir de 'pensée globale' que celle qui, tournant le dos à la ségrégation théorique, s'appuie de fait sur les archives de ce que Édouard Glissant appelait le 'Tout-Monde'*”⁴⁷⁹ (17). Tracing the genealogy of what he calls the 'inversion' of democracy of the contemporary moment through a history ranging from the plantation regime in the early 16th century via the institution of slavery and colonisation (18-19), right up to the 21st century's asymmetry of war and the market economy', the marked in Mbembe's view, functions like a war: “a war that opposes species internally and nature to other human beings”⁴⁸⁰. For Mbembe, this constellation threatens the idea of the political –

479 “There cannot be a 'global thought' other than one that rejects theoretical segregation, that refers back to the archives of what Glissant called Tout-Monde”, my translation.

480 “une guerre qui oppose désormais des espèces entre elles, et la nature aux être humains”, my translation.

understood here in a broader sense as outlined in 1.2. – that is the 'bedrock' for democratic forms of governance (25). In a formulation that reiterates several key concerns of the radical democratic tradition outlined above, Mbembe characterises this democratic mode of governance by an awareness of the essential contingency of social formations, and the need to consistently critique itself, traditions which Glissant had also singled out as the strength of modern democracies (26).

In the same vein, Mbembe warns that democracies are not necessarily non-violent but that, similar to Glissant's arguments above, constitutional democracies were, and still are, compatible with forms of slavery and other forms of systematic oppression and discrimination which rely on creating two social orders in one: “a community of equals governs, at least theoretically, through the law of equality and a category of non-equals or the *sans-parts*”⁴⁸¹ (28). Directly referencing Rancière's notion of the *sans-parts*, Mbembe thus finds that the notion of community upheld by modern democracy was mostly one of a 'community of separation' (28), that went hand in hand with nationalist racist regimes and the institutionalisation of a global system of maintaining inequality (31). Mbembe concludes in that regard that the history of democracy has two faces: “a bright body on one side, and a dark body on the other. The colonial empire and the slave states – and more precisely the plantation and the prison – constitute the major emblems of the dark body”⁴⁸² (35). In the same vein as Glissant's argument about the colonial wars of expansion fought in the name of democracies, Mbembe continues the critique of Western democracies from a global angle by enumerating a long list of 'wars of conquest', 'asymmetrical race wars' and 'dirty wars' fought throughout the 19th and 20th century.

Against this tradition of conquest and the bifurcation of the world according to a racial logic, Mbembe points out that pre-colonial African traditions upheld a markedly different vision from the a singular and static conception of human Being he finds at the basis of this 'inversion' of the idea of democracy. Discussing this difference in relation to Martin Heidegger's notion of Being, echoing Glissant's distinction between *être* and *étant* (1.4.1.), he writes “In the African traditions of antiquity, for example, the point of departure for interrogation of human existence was not the question of being, but that of relation, of mutual implication, which is to say, the discovery and the acknowledgement of another flesh than my own”⁴⁸³ (43). The quintessential relational character of African philosophy has been mentioned with regards to the African border model before. In the political-historic terms, this characteristic is usually associated with the Manden Charter,

481 “une communauté des semblables régie, du moins théoriquement, par la loi de l'égalité et une catégorie de non-semblables ou encore de *sans-parts*”, my translation.

482 “le corps solaire, d'une part, et le corps nocturne, d'autre part. L'empire colonial et l'État à esclaves – et plus précisément la plantation et le bagne – constituent les emblèmes majeurs de ce corps nocturne”, my translation.

483 “Dans les traditions africaines antiques par exemple, le point de départ de l'interrogation sur l'existence humaine n'est pas la question de l'être, mais celle de la relation, de l'implication mutuelle, c'est-à-dire, de la découverte et de la reconnaissance d'une autre chair que la mienne”, my translation.

proclaimed in Kurukan Fuga in 1222 after Sunjata Keita founded the Mali Empire. This Charter is referred to as comprising the main characteristics of African political thought and African conceptions of human rights. What is important to recall in this context, about both Mbembe's argument and my own with regards to Glissant's drawing on this tradition, is that referencing this tradition is less concerned with the accuracy of historical accounts, than an awareness of the power of founding myths, such as that of the Greek polis.

Acknowledging their inherently constructed nature, forces one to consider the implications of narratives underlying alternative political traditions. What happens, quite generally put, if one starts to think about the history of democracy from the ancient African civilisation of Egypt, rather than Greece, is one of the questions posed by Afrocentric traditions of thought, such as the work of Muiu and Martin (2008). From the perspective of this broad tradition, Mbembe argues that there is no longer an opposition between 'inside-outside', 'here-there', 'same-foreign'. The democratic thought aligned to this world-view is marked by thinking beyond the 'juxtaposition of singularities' as well as the simplistic 'ideology of integration':

“the democracy to come will be constructed on the basis of a clear distinction between the 'universal' and the 'in-common'. The universal implies the inclusion into something or into an entity that is already constituted. The in-common assumes an engagement of belonging together and of sharing – the idea that there is only one world and that, if it must last, this world has to be shared by everyone who has a right to live on it, all species taken together”⁴⁸⁴ (2016, 59)

This hope in a 'planetary democracy' and a 'democracy of species', steeped in pathos, theologic imaginary and but vague allusions towards actual policy implications as it is – a characteristic Mbembe shares with radical democratic theorists –, is, however, worth highlighting in the light of the general discussion of this chapter. The basic human trait of being-in-common, or in relation, is here opposed to the integration of human beings or collectives into a universal political models, such as liberal representative democracy. Instead of an isolation or selfish pursuit of exclusive national interests to the detriment of others, Mbembe emphasises the value of sharing that should extend to the non-human world as well.

Mbembe has also reiterated this belief in an essay titled *Democracy as a Community of Life*, which is more directly concerned with the South African context, where he argues that what is required is a redefinition of “‘the human' and to re-imagine democracy as a community of life – life itself understood as a relentlessly regenerative force and possibility” (2011, 5). Against Apartheid's institutionalised racism, Mbembe points to the notion of *ubuntu*, as an essential human mutuality

⁴⁸⁴“la démocratie à venir se construira sur la base d'une nette distinction entre l'"universel' et l'"en commun'. L'universel implique l'inclusion à quelque chose ou quelque entité déjà constitué. L'en commun présuppose un rapport de coappartenance et de partage – l'idée d'un monde qui est le seul que nous ayons et qui, our être durable, doit être partagé par l'ensemble de ses ayants droit, toutes espèces confondues”, my translation.

that offers a way of transcending a politics of racial difference towards a shared humanity (6). “Underpinning the Constitution is the hope that, after centuries of attempts by white power to contain blacks, South Africa could become the speech-act of a certain way of being-in-common rather than side by side” (6). Whereas the concepts of the human and humanism are strongly marked by the Western Enlightenment tradition and its reliance on individualism and a singular conception of rationality, African ontologies could thus offer a way out of a long history of 'the human as waste' in Mbembe's view (10). The advantage of the African archive, in that regard, is that the basic sociality of being-in-common which Nancy proposes in abstract philosophic terms is culturally deeply embedded and does not have to be introduced as a foreign concept.

The essentially relational quality of a 'true democracy', which Mbembe envisions, strikes me as directly linked to Glissant's own pronouncements on democracy. In that sense Mbembe's political theory supports a positioning of Glissant as sharing central characteristics with both radical Western democratic theory and the African archive as proposed by Mbembe. Working off these findings, a particular aspect that warrants further interrogation is Glissant's conceptual differentiation between the 'forces of the living' and the 'enemies of the living', which he also equated with a respect for diversity and a defence of the Same or the One. As outlined with regards to Glissant's pronouncements about Africa's global-historical vocation to spread multiplicity (read creolisation) into the world (4.3.2.), Glissant associated the positive side of this political dualism with African cosmologies, a binary-transcending aspect which Mbembe also emphasised in this sub-section. Whereas one of the key characteristics of the radical democratic tradition, as described by Comtesse et al. is the categorical rejection of any fundamental belief or truth, for which Oliver Marchart has coined the notion of a 'post-foundational thought' (2010), Glissant had no difficulty holding on to this foundational truth of political decision making. As recently as his *Anthologie du Tout-Monde* (2010), Glissant wrote about these two opposing forces in a fundamental manner that is worth engaging more directly in the closing of this study (6.3.):

*“J'accepte que notre langage soit offensant, dru et cru, de mamelles ouvertes, de pils surs, de poussières d'insultes, de hoquets lucides, il faut injurier la misère et aplatir les profiteurs. Mais j'allume aussi un boucan de solennités, là où il convient de durer, là où la Relation n'est pas ceci à cela mais du tout au tout. Il est bien vrai que les ennemis du vivant craignent surtout non pas la totalité mais la diversité, non pas l'altérité mais l'étrange et exigeante mixité”*⁴⁸⁵ (ATM 14).

The defence of multiplicity versus the forces of the Same is certainly also implicitly part of Mbembe's democratic project, even though it is not formulated in the same ways. For my project,

⁴⁸⁵“I can accept that our *langage* is offensive, dry and raw, veins open, sour pills, a dust wave of insults, lucid hiccups, one has to attack misery and bring down those who benefit from it. But I am also lighting up a *boucan* of solemnities, where it can last, where Relation is not this and that but everything and everything. It is true that what the enemies of the living are afraid of is not totality but diversity, not alterity but the strange and pressing mixité”, my translation.

this distinction is particularly noteworthy since it harks back to the question Glissant formulated in *Poétique de la relation* with regards to the reconciliation of the 'hard line inherent in any politics and the questioning essential to any relation?'. By arguing that "Widespread consent to specific opacities is the most straightforward equivalent to nonbarbarism" (PR 194), Glissant effectively created a political binary between the forces and enemies of the living. This central finding of my thesis, along with the general implications of oppositional characteristics of his non-oppositional philosophy will have to be further discussed in the concluding discussion (chapter 6.2.). Before doing so, I will supplement the theoretical arguments throughout this section with a discussion of a concrete political movement that can be considered as carrying several characteristics of a Glissantian politics of relation, namely the case of the Zapatista movement.

5.4.3. The case of the Zapatistas – A Living Example of a Glissantian Collective Marronage?

This final sub-section proposes an engagement with the Zapatista movement as a contemporary political movement that I consider to be a suggestive case of contemporary marronage in line with Glissant's democratic thought. In its focus on a concrete political and institutional movement, this line of study thus complements the attention paid to individual embodiments of Glissant's politics and the more elusive fictional/non-fictional kinds of communities analysed in the previous chapter (4.3., 4.4.).

As pointed out above, Glissant did not direct his focus on any of the historical cases of collective marronage that have been considered 'successful' in a conventional sense of the term. It is therefore not surprising that Glissant himself did not address the struggle of the Zapatistas in his writings. His preference for 'forgotten' historical cases of collective marronage (as with Flore Gaillard's *Brigands de Bois*, 4.2.2.) or imaginary ones (as with the Longoué family, 4.2.1.), appears to be a deliberate attempt to pre-empt a confinement of the imaginary implications of his political practice if it were identified with a contemporary representation of it. Due to my own interest in drawing connections between Glissant's intellectual marronage and theoretical and activist movements that could be said to operate on shared terrains, I will in the following present the case of the Zapatista movement as a modern case of marronage, and more importantly a collective practice of a Glissantian politics of relation, thereby demonstrating several significant characteristics of his democratic thought. My claim here is, again, not to present an in-depth study of this movement and its history, but to relate some of the theoretical arguments that have been made on its basis in decolonial and postcolonial scholarship, in the cases of Walter D. Mignolo, and John E. Drabinski, with my own theorisation of Glissant's marronage.

A note of caution at the onset of this study concerns both the discourse of exceptionalism

and singularity that has been created around the Zapatista movement among the radical political left as well as a problematic tendency by scholars to appropriate concrete struggles as base material on which new theories can be produced or old theories validated. My intention in participating in this ambiguous enterprise, which stands the danger of intellectual self-projection onto 'others', is that, in addition to pointing out examples of small (Chamoiseau's offering of coffee to strangers, 5.2.2.), medium (Glissant's praise of solidarity networks, 4.4.2.) and very broad (the promotion of small countries and permeable borders, 5.3.2.) concretisations of Glissant's politics of relation, I would also like to engage with a case that has been discursively presented as combining several of these dimensions in an institutionalised manner. Moreover, instead of blanketly casting the Zapatista movement as a Glissantian political practice, or as the empiric base for the formulation of my theory, the main gesture this sub-section sets out to make is to highlight particular aspects that are related to my discussion so far, and thereby contribute to further demystify Glissant's politics of relation.

A Brief History of the Zapatista Movement

Beginning as an underground movement in 1983, the Zapatistas organised an uprising against the Mexican state in 1993 demanding “work, land, housing, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace“ in their communities (General Command of the EZL). Following several years of negotiations with the Mexican government, the Zapatistas gained control over several territories in the Chiapas region which they have self-governed for more than 14 years with a significant degree of political autonomy. The so-called Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities (*Municipios Autónomos Rebeldes Zapatistas*, MAREZ) are scattered across the Chiapas region like smaller islands in a sea of territory belonging to the Mexican state, comprising a population of around 300,000 inhabitants. They are coordinated by individual councils whose main responsibilities are the provision of health care and education, justice, housing, the promotion of the arts, in addition to fostering overarching political issues, such as the struggle for land rights, Indigenous languages and culture, in discussions with the Mexican state. On an institutional level, the Zapatista government is a federation of participatory democracies similar to the ideals of radical or strong democracies discussed above. Political decisions are taken in general assemblies comprising about 300 families in which anyone older than 12 years is allowed to participate. The expressed aim of these assemblies is to govern by consensus. A majority vote is reserved as exceptions. These small communities form federations, which in turn form autonomous municipalities, which again form further federations with other municipalities to create a total of five regions.

What sounds like, and has been cast as a utopian expression of a romantic liberal-socialist or

anarchist dream, has for some time attracted the interest of political scientists (Sholck 2007), since the Zapatista's existence points to the practicality of a politics that functions outside the principles of political representation and the delegation of power that forms the basis of modern democratic nation-states (Cusset 2017). The structure of the MAREZ is pronouncedly egalitarian, including a strong stance on gender equality, but at the same time accords room for hierarchies that has been described as a “productive tension between the governance of all and diagonal and vertical mechanisms [...] a process-oriented, developing form of governance in which new things have to be invented and tested continuously“. What furthermore marks a difference from casting the Zapatistas as a romantic socialist safe haven detached from its larger politico-economic surroundings, is that, instead of seceding from the Mexican state, or waging a battle against the capitalist system in which it functions, the Zapatistas MAREZ-communities are based on the possibility of operating both within and without these existing structures, based on the acknowledgement that neither will cease to exist in the foreseeable future. This 'strategic entanglement' (5.1.3.) with the state can take on the form of a collaboration, in cases where the MAREZ can trade any excess production of its subsistence economy with non-Zapatista regions for materials that they are not able to produce themselves. Likewise, it can take the form of the exploitation of state resources, in cases where they tap into the national electricity network. This complex relationship with the state, which is in line with Glissant's depiction of the relationship between maroon communities and the plantation, has in recent years received increased media coverage when María de Jesús Patricia Martínez, a Zapatista representative, for the first time, decided to participate in the Mexican elections. The goal of the Zapatista's first election campaign was to empower the 56 Indigenous minorities in Mexico, comprising up to 16 million people, many of which are running their own movements in solidarity with the Zapatistas.

The Zapatistas and Decolonial Theory

Walter D. Mignolo has prominently referred to the Zapatista movement as a lived expression of several key concepts in the tradition of decolonial thought. Based on a lecture delivered in 1997, Mignolo dedicated a chapter called *The Zapatistas' Theoretical Revolution – Its Historical, Ethical, and Political Consequences* in his monograph *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (2011). In this chapter Mignolo puts a strong emphasis on what I have previously called Glissant's epistemic marronage (1.4.3.), by referring to the Zapatista's 'theoretical revolution' as a “conceptual delinking from a master frame of reference situated in Western ways of thinking” (2011, 215). Observing how they have, over time, shifted from traditional left wing ideologies, such as Leninism, to an endorsement of indigenous cosmologies, Mignolo writes of the Zapatista's “potent move toward decoloniality of knowledge and of being” (219). Cusset, who is concerned with the elaboration of

decolonial concepts, observes something similar when he perceives the Zapatista's ideological to be comprised of a 'heterogenous mix of communist, egalitarian and difference theories', and a style of struggle and way of living which he describes in terms of humility and pride, a 'patient relationship with time', coupled with the 'poetic universalism of Indigenous beliefs', coupled with humour and self-irony (2017).

Mignolo puts particular emphasis on the fact that the Zapatista's theoretical revolution is not limited to the theoretical realm, but primarily expressed in a material struggle to regain the control of ones land,⁴⁸⁶ which is intimately tied to regaining a sense of dignity that has been structurally negated by what Mignolo calls the 'coloniality of power' and its 500 year long history (2011, 216). Of interest in light of the previous discussion on Glissant's democratic thought, is Mignolo's writing about the Zapitista's understanding and practice of democracy, as it is informed by what could be called a 'creolised archive of political theory'. Framing the Zapatista's institutional set-up as a movement geared towards a 'decolonisation of democracy', Mignolo begins his appraisal, and explanation of the organisation of the MAREZ, through a linguistic approach by recognising that Tojolab'al, the language spoken in Chiapas, relies on a cosmology that differs from European languages in so far as it does not contain a designation for an 'other', the concepts of nation-state or citizenship (228), no stranger or 'less than fully human subjects', that are in need of integration into the existing political community. For Mignolo, the Tojolab'al language only refers to interdependent subjects instead of the dichotomy between self and other. As a result, the question for Mignolo becomes: "How can one imagine 'democracy' from a Tojolabal perspective, a perspective that has been and continues to be enacted by the Zapatistas?" (228).⁴⁸⁷ Mignolo finds a response to this question in the principle of '*Mandar obedeciendo*', which he translates as 'To rule and obey at the same time' (229). For him, this principle reflects the central 'conception of social relation corresponding to an intersubjective structure of language' (229). Referring to a letter signed by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, EZLN) in 1994, Mignolo understands this principle to comprise the following call:

"not to silence the voices of the few, rather for them to remain in their place, hoping that mind and heart will come together in the will of the most and the inspiration of the few (...) In this way our strength was born in the mountain, where the ruler obeys, when she or he is unquestionable, and the one who obeys command with the common heart of the genuine men and women" (229).

Instead of providing further details as to how this principle is translated into institutional practices, Mignolo, along the lines of the argument put forward in the previous two sections, moves

486 The Zapatista's emphasis on the necessity to reclaim the land appears incompatible with Glissant's general reluctance against claims for legitimate ownership of territory, an issue I will take up further below.

487 As Mignolo points out, the struggle of the Zapatistas is not an isolated phenomenon in Latin America and that Indigenous nations in Bolivia and Ecuador are fighting similar struggles (2011, 228).

towards a meta-theoretical discussion by stressing that the Zapatista's endorsement of democracy, modelled on the *Mandar obedeciendo* principle, should not be exclusively seen in the genealogy of Western democratic theory or as the 'empty signifier' or 'abstract universal' bemoaned by post-democracy skeptics (230). Instead it could be seen as a principle of social organization that is shared across the world, within states but also among social movements (230), and that it can have different points of theoretical references, such as the Bolivian '*ayllu democracy*' espoused by the Evo Morales government in Bolivia, which Mignolo cites and which is based on principles inherited from the Aymaras and Quechuas (230-31). Identifying and problematising the macro-narrative of democracy as inherently Western is not only important as an academic exercise for Mignolo, but as a way of providing a theoretical foundation that would allow for different democratic forms to compete with one another, or alternatively to exist side-by-side: "the form state, next to the form ayllu" (232). Like Glissant, Mignolo does not dismiss Western democracy outright, and instead calls for its 'regionalisation', making the following argument:

"The frame in which 'democracy' has been introduced by the Zapatistas has opened up the need to look at the multiplication of interlocking histories and their corresponding legacies, linked by the coloniality of power and the colonial difference. Those who are imagining democratic futures in Latin America (the Zapatistas, the constitutions of Bolivia and Ecuador) or in India (Chatterjee) can hardly take seriously the invitation to insist on the potential of democratic politization as the true European legacy from ancient Greece onwards" (51).

Instead of rejecting the very notion, Mignolo makes a similar case to the one I have made in the previous sub-section about African democratic traditions, namely to pluralise the archive of democratic thought in such a way that not all roads have to lead to Greece. As Mignolo points out, in yet another overlap with Glissant's conception of marronage, an important characteristic of the struggles of the Zapatistas, is that it is not about choosing to either collaborate with the state or not, but that transforming the current states by forcing changes in their constitutions, as well as operating parallel to the states (as in Mexico) should all be considered as equally valid decolonial options (229). As Mignolo argues in what I have repeatedly cast as a Glissantian argument, "Pretending that one is preferable to the other would be too 'modern' and would place us on the road to truth without parenthesis, which is not a decolonial option" (229). Instead of endorsing a universalist claim for the superiority of a single political model, as has been the implicit standard in an empiricist tradition of political science, what can be learned from the Zapatista's movement is what Mignolo calls 'pluriversality' or 'diversality', for which he interestingly credits Glissant,⁴⁸⁸ as a universal project worth endorsing (234-35): "a world composed of multiple worlds, the right to be

⁴⁸⁸ Mignolo credits Glissant with the concept of diversality without elaborating where and in what ways Glissant conceptualises this term, other than by referring to his thought being "founded in Creole, as language and Afro-Caribbean consciousness, rather than in Spanish and German" (2011, 236, also see footnote 39).

different because we are all equals (instead of assuming that since we are all equal what we have in common is our difference).”

John E. Drabinski's Zapatismo via Glissant

Whereas Mignolo's interpretation of the Zapatista movement is only indirectly connected to Glissant and his political legacy, John Drabinski in his book *Levinas and the Postcolonial* (2013) establishes a more immediate link between Glissant and the Zapatista movement, particularly in the form of its former leader Subcomandante Marcos. Drabinski arrives at an exploration of the political dimension of Glissant's usage of the rhizome concept (see 1.4.1. and 5.1.) and the politics of the Zapatista via a recognition of Emmanuel Levinas' difficulty to transition from the level of an inter-personal ethics, between the self and the Other, to an ethical politics taking place in national, international and global frameworks (165-67). According to Drabinski, Glissant's 'appropriation' (169) of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome, led him to develop a set of arguments about how different conceptions of identities are tied to large-scale forms of political violence.

Whereas Levinas (and other thinkers that are ideologically distant from him, such as Carl Schmitt, 177) relied on a differentiation between the Self and the Other to formulate his theories of identity, Glissant – based on the historic experience of the Caribbean –, approached identities as being comprised of a multitude of intersecting roots that cannot be subsumed under a singularised form of identity. This rhizomatic understanding of identity is in line with Glissant's notion of Antillanité mentioned in my discussion of Neil Robert's Four-Stage-Theory (5.1.2.), as it is based on the diverse cultural and linguistic entanglements that are the outcome of centuries of creolisation (5.1.3.). As Drabinski points out, and as I have briefly outlined in the introduction to this thesis, Glissant's endorsement of rhizomatic conceptions of identity could also be linked to what he later termed archipelagic thinking, which he opposed/apposed to continental thought, as well as the distinction he drew between atavistic and composite cultures (172). Whereas the former embraces and accepts the existence of other identities with which it is in contact – or in Drabinski's words: “the rhizome says yes to diversity and what it offers as connection to place“ (174) –, a single root identity “commits violence against composite culture and subjectivities by eliminating, either through the construction of mythic and epic stories or material genocidal violence, the Other of that privileged root“ (173). From this 'polyrooted' understanding of identity, a set of arguments against nationalism and the political form of the nation-state can be developed, which I have discussed earlier, and to which Drabinski also alludes in the following terms: “The language of national and sovereign space gives way to solidarity and building-with The Same and the Other [...] cease to be the dyadic ground for the construction of a politics and, instead becomes items in the element of creolized and creolizing space – rhizoming a fragile connection“ (177-78).

For Drabinski, the bridge between Glissant and the Zapatistas is for Drabinski a specific political practice that does not rely on the epic of any nation-state construction that necessarily excludes others from joining it or 'consumes others' by forcing them to become the same as in the current 'integration paradigm' upheld in several member states of the EU during the 'migration crisis', as discussed in the previous sections. Re-reading Subcomandante Marcos' *Sixth Reflection*, Drabinski finds in its advocacy of "travel, listening, speaking, keeping one's word, and the patience of time", a concrete articulation of a rhizomatic politics as 'being as difference' (177). Drabinski thus reads Subcomandante Marcos in a similar light as Mignolo, by calling Marcos' political guidelines an expression of the principle of 'revolution and leadership from below' (179), or what Mignolo emphasised as the principle of *Mandar obedeciendo*. In Drabinski's view, travelling in Marcos' sense is a way of 'seeking the Other and otherness' in Levinasian terms, a general outward direction to 'the world' that is as much in line with Glissant's own movements towards the world (chapter 3) as with his philosophy of relation (1.4.1.).

Again, as Mignolo has pointed out before, Drabinski emphasises that for Marcos, the Zapatista project is not defined by an 'anti' positioning vis-à-vis the state, despite its overt anti-capitalist and anti-neoliberal economic imperialism struggle (179). It is, instead, concerned with the development of an ethical politics on all institutional levels. Drabinski describes this direction in the following Glissantian terms: "ethical politics in Marcos' account, is concerned firstly with the crossing of borders – or even the elimination of them – while at the same time maintaining a sense of connection. A rhizomatic relation that refuses to oppose difference and contact" (179).

In a striking similarity to the military tactics Glissant imagines Flore Gaillard to have developed in *Ormerod* (see 4.2.2.), Drabinski describes the Zapatistas general political strategy as a "zigzag" (181), between a struggle that is tied to a particular landscape and abstract political considerations: "This zigzag relation between territory and practice confirms the non-centered site of beginning for politics" (181). Importantly for Drabinski, *Zapatismo* is not tied to a singular notion of identity bound to a specific territory (181) or an exclusive ethnic ideology of *indigenismo* which he considers the movement to have endorsed in the early stages of the struggle. Instead, if the region of Chiapa needs to be seen as being of territorial importance for *Zapatismo*, it would be as a 'region of radical difference' (184), in which roots are but "points of ethical political contact" (181), of which I would argue Glissant's conceptualisation of the Caribbean is another case in point. Drabinski thus considers the Zapatista struggle as Indigenous and interstitial "only in so far as we understand both indigeneity and interstitiality to be fully ethical political spaces of identity and praxis" (185).

Important to emphasise at this point is that, although Glissant's oeuvre repeatedly references

Indigenous nations as forming part of his notion of a global Batouto people (4.3.), his connection to Indigeneity clearly privileged spiritual or world-view aspects over the importance of concrete struggles being fought over the right to inhabit the land of ones' ancestors. Glissant's assertion of flexible forms of belonging over the legitimacy of Indigenous claims thus points to an incompatibility between a strand of Glissantian politics of relation with Indigenous struggles, at least on an abstract philosophical level.⁴⁸⁹

Lastly, From a Glissantian perspective that endorses a conception of relatedness that is not based on biology but on what I have referred to as *signalétique*, a spiritual and often-times hidden relatedness through signs and symbols (4.3.1.), one could point out that Marcos' decision to rename himself Agent Zero – at the point in time where Drabinski identifies the opening from *indigenismo* to polyrootedness (184)⁴⁹⁰,–, not only echoes the importance of naming oneself that I addressed in the context of maroon societies, but also Glissant's description of the Batouto tradition of carrying the letter O in their names, which symbolically shares the same shape as the number 0 or the letter X, as in Malcolm X and the black tradition of coded language. Although the military aesthetics of the EZLN and earlier (singular) identitarian basis of their struggle might have distanced Glissant personally from endorsing the Zapatista's struggle, both their theory concerning an 'ethical politics', as well as their actual institutional practice (182), provide ample grounds for describing the Zapatista's movement as a Glissantian politics of relation. This finding complements the main emphasis placed throughout this study on Glissant's own intellectual marronage and the kind of poet's politics he performed in the process, as well as the less conventional political movements analysed in the course of the previous chapters in the context of Glissant's (real and imagined) world-communities.

Section Summary

This section set out to interrogate the implications of Glissant's intellectual marronage for contemporary debates around democracy. The reasoning behind this was both driven by Glissant's own call to 'imagine a politics of relation', as it was inspired by current initiatives to 'decolonise democracy' as they have been sparked by postcolonial scholars and activists. Moreover, it was based on the conviction that if one aims at convincingly arguing the relevance of Glissant's politics of relation in the realm of political theoretical discussions, its ability to respond to some of the most pressing political concerns of our time serves as an important indicator. I have demonstrated this with regards to the issue of migration in the previous section, a conceptual area located the very

⁴⁸⁹This aspect will be taken up in the conclusion of this study (6.3.).

⁴⁹⁰Drabinski describes this decision in the following way: “Agent Zero prunes the remnants of vanguardism in order to make the rhizome work and live [...] and such rhizoming of rhizomes is expressed concisely in the language of travelling, listening, duty, building, and of course solidarity“ (2013, 184-85).

intersection of domestic and foreign policy. While troubling the very logic of this inside-outside dichotomy, this section I showed that the same can also be done for the internal set-up of political communities.

In tracing a theoretical line of flight from the mythical point of origin of Western democratic theory, the Greek polis, to the democratic radical tradition, to African democratic traditions and the Zapatista's mode of governance, I not only pursued Glissant's proposition that there might be other democratic systems 'out there' whose potentials have not yet been sufficiently considered from a political theoretical perspective. Bearing the importance of critical studies of the colonial entanglements of Western democracies in mind, this line of enquiry took on more creative or exploratory characteristics. I made this point by revisiting the case of the African political archive and the Zapatista's blend of Indigenous political traditions and Western theories. Both based on cultural basis where relational world-views or what Nancy terms being-in-common has a long tradition, the main reproaches Glissant levelled against the dominant mode of Western liberal democracies could be addressed. If the imaginary changes from the maintenance of a self-centred, autonomous individual towards a radically relational, interdependent community of individuals, the issues of a technocratic democracy, the reproduction of entrenched social hierarchies and the tendency towards outward aggression subside. Instead of being anti-Western, this strand of Glissant's democratic thought suggests that, in order to decolonise the concept of democracy, a first step would entail to take seriously the diversity of democratic traditions across the world and the theoretical and practical potentials they accord. For Glissant's political thought, a democratic culture or a 'democracy of the everyday' could thus be identified as being of greater importance than specific political forms of mechanisms of governance.

By associating Glissant's democratic imaginary of relation with a set of concrete cases, such as the debate about consensus democracies in Africa or the Zapatista's approach to hierarchies, I counterbalanced what I perceive to be a tendency among literary studies and the radical democratic tradition to remain on a fairly abstract level in discussing the essential values of freedom and equality when it comes to how literature relates to politics, be it on the level of form, style or content. My claim in that regard was that, while none of these cases can be neatly appropriated as properly Glissantian, his democratic thought entails a concrete dimension that can be identified in these worldly movements. In that regard, I further pursued the 'utopian', or rather non-pragmatic, potential of Glissant's philosophy and its interest in suggesting political models and practices on small, medium and large scales: from the power of the sign or cipher to the model of small countries and poetics in international organisations. Referring to a relational reading of his oeuvre, and taking both his fictional practice, life-writing and organisational action seriously alongside his

expression of concrete political commentary, proved particularly instructive in this regard.

A last finding, and in my view particularly important one, refers to the dividing line Glissant implicitly maintained throughout his career. This aspect, which is frequently overseen or disavowed by Glissant scholars and postcolonial scholars, who foreground the rhizomatic and relational nature of Glissant's philosophy directly responds to the guiding interest of this study: How can one do politics with an imaginary of relation, when politics necessarily involves the taking of sides. My study of Glissant's communities in chapter 4 and 5 did not provide a straightforward response, which is why I consider it important to return to this question in the concluding chapter. What can, nevertheless, be retained from the study so far is that Glissant was particularly invested in exploring how a community that is for or made up of the 'forces of the living' could be constructed. This is visible in his arguments about the need to build new world-communities, whose members are above all defined by the above mentioned respect for multiplicity (2.3., 3.3., 4.4.). Tying these findings back to a movement of marronage, Glissant could be cast as effectively advocated for an exodus of those with a relational imaginary out of the dominant imaginary marked by capitalism, nationalism and celebration of homogeneity. This specific understanding of marronage could take both the form of an imaginary flight as it entailed the actual practice of setting up other institutions within and outside the confines of the nation-state. On the other hand, his political practice also clearly entailed the belief that a relational imaginary could spread over time and that, through steady infiltration, it could replace or reform an adherence to single roots, the One and the Same. This belief is inherent in the abstract, world-historic, dimension of creolisation as it is evident in Glissant's tireless discursive and non-discursive interventions.

Chapter Summary

The main interest of this chapter was to 'branch off' from Glissant's own writings and actions, which I described in terms of marronage in the previous chapters, and to explore possible points of connection, extension and opposition Glissant's political thought could encounter in the field of political theory. Engaging with a set of texts that suggest themselves in such a discussion, I have focussed on the notions of liberation and exodus (5.1.), movements across borders (5.2., 5.3.) and democracy (5.4.). As I repeatedly stressed, the examples chosen in this process cannot be seen as Glissantian in the sense that Glissant would have approved of them, but as lines of flight in their own right that his work evoke, based on from the perspective maintained by this thesis. In the pursuit of this line of enquiry, it was possible to productively bring Glissant in conversation with established political theoretical debates in order to emphasise the conceptualisation of marronage as shaping his overall politics of relation, but also to contribute a Glissantian perspective to existing discussions around key ideas in the field of political studies. My emphasis in each of the subsections of this chapter was not to isolate Glissant's political thought and to present it as extraordinary or even superior to related concepts and ideas. Instead, I was as interested in apparent overlaps with some of the more established positions held in the field of political theory, as I was curious about moments where his conception and practice of marronage diverged significantly.

Beginning this study with an engagement with Neil Robert's conceptualisation of what he considers Glissant's understanding of liberation through marronage, I made the case to place Glissant's marronage in the larger framework of his politics of relation. The main differences between Roberts' approach and the one put forward in this thesis was the multilayeredness and multi-directionality in Glissant's overall work on, and practice of marronage that tends to get lost when his specific project of Antillanité is upheld as its fixed end-goal. Working off my analysis of his fictional work in the previous chapter, I framed Glissant's marronage as moving into several directions at once, not only in a geographic sense but also conceptually and epistemologically. I also argued that in contrast to Roberts' focus on the notion of freedom, Glissant's work repeatedly complicates this notion. The goal for a Glissantian politics is not emancipation but Relation, in the sense of being able to locate oneself to ones human and non-human surroundings, as well as a relation between ones specific locality and the world at large.

By bringing Glissant conception of marronage into conversation with Isabel Lorey's concept of temporary withdrawal I emphasised the kinds of relationships that Glissant's marronage entertains with established political institutions. I argued that Glissant's conception of marronage is incompatible with a neat de-linking or complete withdrawal into independence or sovereignty, but that it is also different from the temporary or strategic withdrawal Lorey associates with the

historical case of the Plebeian movement out of Rome, and with contemporary anti-capitalist movements in the West. Instead of instrumentally employing withdrawal to strategic political ends, Staying continuously on the move, as is the case in contemporary migration movements perhaps offers more productive points of departure for an inclusion of Glissant's sense of marronage in contemporary political debates. Marronage is, in this case, not only a movement out of a state of oppression to a zone of refuge – an interpretation which I problematised – nor is it an exception to the rule of being a sedentary subject under a system of good governance. Instead, marronage becomes a permanent mode of engagement with changing political communities, one that comprises all kinds of entanglements and allegiances *at the same time*, without having to choose between one or the other. Instead of working towards an integration into the existing set-up, Glissant's marronage emphasises a motion of *passing*, which it shares with Mbembe's African political archive and its belief that political evolution requires continuous movement. These considerations led me to a third complex of questions revolving around Glissant's thought on democracy. By presenting his relationship with ancient Greek political thought and by pointing to the aspects where he diverts from the founding narrative of Western democratic evolution, I pointed into two directions that I perceive to be productive extensions of his views on democracy. The first lead to what I have called the African political archive, and the second to a contemporary struggle of the Zapatistas. As I argued, both of these traditions share significant characteristics with Glissant political thought.

In sum, this chapter has shown that it is possible to productively position Glissant's marronage in a context of larger political theoretical debates. This line of inquiry not only strengthens the general thrust of my thesis. Connecting his view on democracy to a larger political tradition also contributed to a better understanding of the main characteristics of his politics, the historical and epistemological background from which it emerges, and where it stands in relation to more prominent struggles against neo-liberal modes of governance. Showing how Glissant's politics can be recognised in contemporary political struggles, such as the one fought by the Zapatista movement, but also acts on a sub-national or even interpersonal scale, furthermore strengthens my thesis, that an engagement with Glissant's work must not be reserved for the poetic or literary realm, but that it bears vast resonances with contemporary decolonial movements.

Chapter 6:
Glissant's Politics of Relation in Perspective

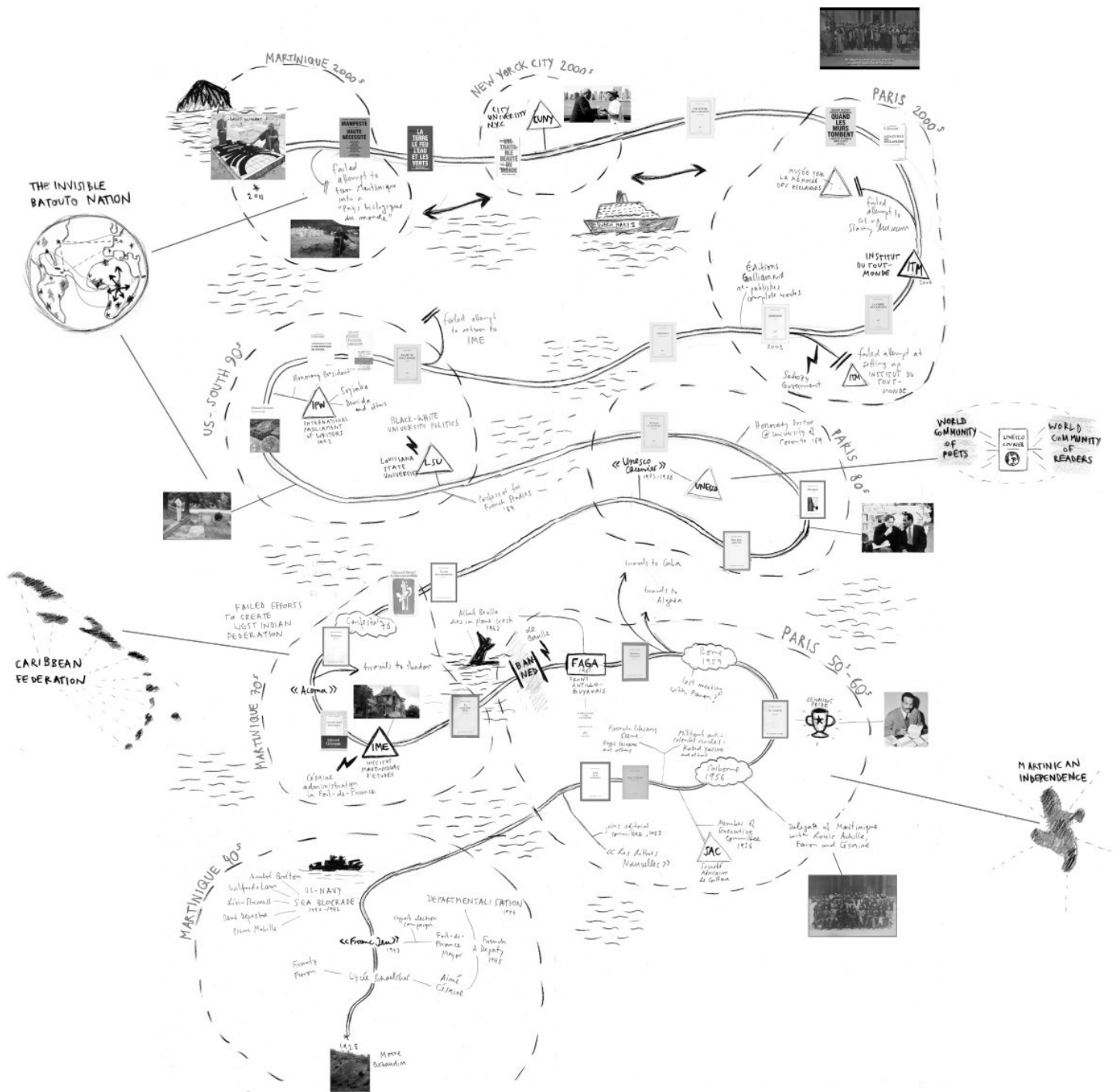


Illustration 8: Map depicting main movements of Glissant's intellectual marronage

6.0. Chapter Introduction

I prefaced this work with an explanation about how mapping had turned into a productive method for this study of Édouard Glissant's politics of relation. Without having to fall back on established categorical or chronological divisions of his work, it allowed me to descriptively sketch out the landscape of everything that could be considered as being of political importance about it, and to pursue unexpected connections branching off its main concerns, before it became possible to discern the overall shape of its diverse set of political practices, as well as a set of reoccurring strategies running across them. Outside the framework of this thesis, in a literal sense, I was not able to draw a map that could illustrate my perception of Glissant's intellectual marronage, until I had reached the final stages of this research. I first had to work out its defining traits in writing, finding my way 'on foot' through the Glissantian forest so to say, before it became possible to discern the overall proposition made by the personal and conceptual movements contained in his political archive.

What the Map Shows and Does Not Show

The drawing preceding this concluding chapter (illustration 8) is the outcome of this work. On a base layer, the map retraces Glissant's physical trajectory that led him in a zigzag fashion from Martinique to France, back to Martinique and then again to France, before he moved to the US to complete the transatlantic triangle that would frame Glissant's mode of circulation for the last two decades of his life. At first sight, the bold line denoting his trajectory appears like a classical rendition of the main movements, events, conflicts and achievements of his life, not unlike the stereotypical biography with which I critically engaged at the start of this thesis. At second sight, however, several additional aspects become visible on the map. The different places Glissant frequented are, for example, not tied to the mercator representation of the world but appear like islands of a larger archipelago. Moreover, the chronology of his life does not progress steadily from left to right, or from the bottom to top. Instead it moves slightly up and down, back and forth. Although the map alludes to a dynamic of *detour* and *retour*, it suggests that a return to the same place is not possible, as it has also undergone changes. The spaces through which Glissant moves on the map can, in this sense differ from the permanent official political entities of Martinique, France and the US, and rather appear as social islands or problem-spaces, characterised by a specific dynamic of political questions and answers (Scott 1999, 8) – in Glissant's case both the concrete geography of the Caribbean and the abstract global phenomenon of creolisation. Due to the limitation of the page and the imperative of legibility to which the map abides, it cannot depict the complex interactions Glissant entertained with these different contexts in greater detail. Several images, nevertheless, allude to the fact that Glissant did not work in isolation, but was part of

several intellectual communities, small and large. There is, for example, the famous 'class picture' taken at the *First Congress of Black Writers and Artists* in front of the Sorbonne University in 1956 (bottom right), and a retake of the same scene fifty years later, in which Glissant occupies a central position in the front row, thus voluntarily occupying the central positions of Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor in the first staging of this intellectual community (top right). As a way of indicating the importance of some of his longer philosophical interlocutors and friends, the map also features Félix Guattari, who lived with Glissant for several months in the 1980s (Noudelmann 2018, 260-63), the dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson, whose conversation with Glissant is recorded in the short film *Making History* (McKinnon and Tripp 2008), and Glissant's self-proclaimed literary disciple, the Martinican novelist Patrick Chamoiseau. In terms of his political practice, as conceptualised in this thesis, the map schematically illustrates the different community-building projects Glissant was committed to on textual and organisational levels: From the struggle for Martinican autonomy as part of the *Front des Antillais et Guyanais pour l'Autonomie* (FAGA) in the 1960s, to the dream of a Caribbean Federation in the 1970s, and the various world-communities he imagined from the 1990s onwards. Alongside these personal commitments and abstract ideas, the institutions he created (the *Institut martiniquais d'étude*, and the *Institut du Tout-Monde*) and collaborated with (*UNESCO Courier*/Louisiana State University/International Parliament of Writers/the French State etc.) also feature on the map.

The general direction the map proposes takes the form of a flight from the island of Martinique into the world. It is a movement of marronage, not a case of errantry, circular nomadism or continuous movement across borders. From the perspective endorsed by this study, this sequence of acts forms part of a larger political tradition that proceeds from the premise that the heavy shadows of slavery and colonialism can only be cast off through the creation of a new vision of the world, of humanity and the relations fostered among humans and between humans and the natural world. Although the map could be read as a steady shift from the local to the global, Glissant set himself the task to consistently create rhizomes connecting these two dimensions to one another. The movement into the world does, therefore, not imply a neglect of local issues. That is why, as can be discerned from the main themes of the publications that litter his path, Glissant's engagement with Martinique takes place on the same visual level as his engagements with US-American, French or global political issues. This is as much as the map is able to show. By design, it has to reduce complexity in a drastic manner. While certain general characteristics of his political practice can be made visible through it – such as the importance of movement, the changing political models he proposed, the willingness to foster alliances with different political actors – more nuanced or more general aspects, necessarily escape it.

Mapmaking as Wayfinding

This thesis complements the superficiality of the map by taking seriously the complexity of the object of study, while acknowledging that there is something about the 'poets politics' (1.1.), something about the '*armes miraculeuses*' (preface) that, in the final instance, escapes systematic analysis. A line of criticism that could be levelled against the illustration of Glissant's intellectual marronage, and against the kind of mapmaking practice that undergirds much of this research, has been formulated by Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift (1995), who perceive the very idea of mapping human subjects as potentially problematic:

“There is the difficulty of mapping something that does not have precise boundaries. There is the difficulty of mapping something that cannot be counted as singular but only as a mass of different and sometimes conflicting subject positions. There is the difficulty of mapping something that is always on the move, culturally, and in fact. There is the difficulty of mapping something that is only partially locatable in time space“ (1).

As Pile and Thrift point out, mapping the trajectory of a human being entails the risk of denying the heterogeneity inherent in what it means to be human, since human subjects cannot be reduced to a physical body, but are made up of multiple identities, complex visible and non-visible relations, as well as conscious and unconscious dimensions impacting a human being's sense of self. This evokes the danger of reproducing the kind of mapping associated with modes of surveillance, control and subordination associated with the Enlightenment tradition of cartography. Bearing these warning signs in mind does, however, not mean that mapmaking as a practice has to be discarded altogether. For one, this research did not aim at mapping Glissant as a subject the way a biographer does. The mapmaking contained in this study was interested in the interplay of Glissant's thought and practice, of which his practice of life-writing formed a part. Moreover, this research did not attempt to produce a complete account of Glissant's life-work, but a theoretically founded political reading of his work to be complemented and critiqued by others. In his essay *Mapping the Land/Body/Subject: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies in African Narrative* (2002) Harry Garuba points to another way out of the kind of cul-de-sac signalled by Pile and Thrift. This route thinks of mapping as 'wayfinding' (112), as a process that involves the attempt to descriptively cover as much ground as possible, “on foot instead of looking down at it from an airplane” (Pile and Thrift 1995, 1).

The map of Glissant's intellectual marronage, which this thesis proposed, is the result of a desire to trace a path through Glissant's oeuvre. As such, it was above all inspired by an interest in the political implications of postcolonial literature, and the sense that there is a need to make Glissant's politics of relation, and similar practices visible – a sense that was based on the intuition that, as Glissant wrote about the necessity of developing a shared sense of solidarity across the

Caribbean archipelago, “we miss it and it is missing us”⁴⁹¹ (OD 13).

Chapter Overview

The conclusion of this study will bring together, clarify and discuss several aspects left open by the individual chapters of this thesis. In the process, I will not reiterate the detailed findings of each of the chapters, as I have done in the individual section and chapter summaries, but take a step back and reflect on Glissant's politics of relation with the aim of gaining a more congruent understanding of the main contributions and findings resulting from this work.

The first two sections provide answers to the main thesis questions laid out in the introduction, namely what *is* Glissant's politics of relation (6.1.)? And what are its defining *characteristics* (6.2.)? The third section (6.3.) debates some of its implications in the context of central debates in postcolonial studies, thereby taking up several threads that have sprung up in the analysis of the individual chapters with the aim of tying them together. This discussion mainly revolves around the alleged non-binary and non-oppositional thrust of Glissant's philosophy and politics, and will particularly touch on the role of universalist and relativist aspects of Glissant's work. The fourth and final section (6.4.) lists the potential contribution this research can make to debates among Glissant scholars, postcolonial literary and political studies, while reflecting on the interdisciplinary methodology employed in this thesis.

⁴⁹¹For the full quote see 4.2.3.

6.1. Conceptualising the Politics of Relation as a Postcolonial Political Practice

This section formulates a concise response to the main question underlying this study, namely what *is* Glissant's politics of relation, and in what way can the term be employed for research outside the confines of Glissant's political archive? In responding to these questions, I concretise the meaning of a Glissantian concept that has, so far, not been theorised in Glissant scholarship. In a nutshell, the politics of relation emerged as the name of a particular postcolonial political practice that can be productively used as a concept to analyse the political dimension of Glissant, as much as it points to a field of applicability outside his work. Regarding the former, it denotes a holistic and multilayered practice operating mainly in the realm of the imaginary, but also on the level of institutions, small and large communities, where it is constantly engaged in fostering interpersonal and collective relations, trying to intervene in existing political structures while simultaneously being invested in the creation or proposition of alternatives to them. Outside Glissant's own work, the term moreover emerged as an analytical concept with which one can describe the practices of writers, poets, musicians and visual artists, but also of networks of humanitarian groups, networks of solidarity, as well as political movements or state actors. Its non-oppositional, relational stance emerged as its particularity in this respect. This character trait appeared particularly valuable in that it bears the potential to provide new philosophical common ground between a variety of progressive struggles that share a commitment to affect change from neocolonial world-views and exclusionary conceptions of the human, towards a relational imagination that is marked by a profound respect for differences at all levels.

In the course of this study, it became clear that I pursued three different approaches in my description of Glissant's politics of relation. This division was not clear from the onset, but rather emerged through the engagement with the material, that is in the research process. I will in the following briefly summarise these different approaches in the following sequence: A first approach was based on Glissant's own usage of the term (6.1.1.), a second was based on my own appropriation of the term as a lens to study Glissant's oeuvre (6.1.2.), and third approach abstracted from my description of Glissant's personal political practice in order to set it in conversation with other intellectual traditions and political movements (6.1.3.). Although it makes sense to differentiate among these different meanings for analytic clarity, these normative, analytic and abstract dimensions of these usages do not have to be seen as separate from, but rather as blending into one another. In fact, it is only when these dimensions are acknowledged to form part of Glissant's political practice, that a comprehensive view of the politics of relation can emerge, as presented in the synopsis above.

6.1.1. The Politics of Relation as Normative Concept

Pursuing a relatively classical political theoretical line of enquiry, I began this study by identifying the way Glissant himself employed the term 'politics of relation' in his own work, a line of research that was limited to the introduction to this thesis (1.4.1.). By identifying the larger conceptual configuration in which he placed the politics of relation, it became apparent that it was intimately tied to his notion of poetics of relation in a mutually re-enforcing manner. While this finding confirmed my intuition of the centrality of the political dimension in Glissant's philosophy, this analytical approach did not lead much further. Confining this research to a study of the explicit meanings attached to the concept in his writings risked only revealing the proverbial tip of the iceberg (in the Caribbean context perhaps more fittingly a volcanic rock) of a deeper and more multilayered political practice. From a classical analytical angle, the politics of relation would remain focussed on an interrogation of texts and statements by Glissant that directly concern the political systems of Martinique, France or the United States, or the actions of politicians like Aimé Césaire, Nicolas Sarkozy, or Barack Obama. In this narrow understanding of the term, Glissant's political action would be tied back to an engagement with conventional realm of politics as referring to the official political system (1.2.1). As a concept it denotes a normative standard for a politics that is inspired or informed by a relational imaginary of the world which, at its most basic level, is characterised by cultural relativism and a commitment to a struggle against structural injustice, inequality and oppression while refraining from a divisive discourse. In this light, the politics of relation mainly refers to a reconciliatory, diplomatic and non-confrontative kind of politics, as symbolised by the figure of Nelson Mandela. Although there are ample reasons to question an uncritical celebration of a politics of compromise and radical inclusion, as the policies of the Mandela and Thabo Mbeki governments, to stick with this example indicate (6.3.2.), I chose to place the emphasis of my study elsewhere, that is on Glissant's political archive itself. This was decision was not only due to the fact that some of Glissant's fiercest critics had already forcefully analysed his political work through this conceptual lens (1.3.1.), but also because I deemed it necessary to first study Glissant's politics on its own terms before evaluating some of its strengths and weaknesses, a line of work I will continue in 6.3. These limitations notwithstanding, the case can, nevertheless made, that such an understanding of the politics of relation should not be discarded as irrelevant. Even if the politics of relation were to remain on what I perceive to be a superficial level, it could still be employed as a productive normative concept for the analysis of established political systems and actors (6.4.). In other words, it could provide a conceptional lens through which postcolonial critics could study the strengths and weaknesses of particular political regimes according to the idealised, or even utopian, standard of a relational politics, such as

Glissant and Chamoiseau elaborated them in their jointly authored manifestoes *Quand les murs tombent* (2007) and *L'intraitable beauté du monde* (2009).

6.1.2. The Politics of Relation as Analytical Concept

The main work of this thesis was based on my appropriation of the notion of the politics of relation as an analytical concept without an explicit normative dimension to describe the political dimension of Glissant's own work across chapters 2, 3 and 4. This line of study proceeded from the realisation that, apart from a strictly normative understanding of the politics of relation, Glissant's personal political practice comprised several dimensions that warranted to be studied through a broader conceptual lens of the political, such as it was elaborated throughout section 1.2. Attributing this label to Glissant's own work meant moving beyond it because Glissant did not claim this title for a description of his work. The decision to apply the concept in this manner was sparked by the curiosity of what would become visible when a narrow understanding of (true) political action was replaced by a broader conception through which aspects that are usually tied to the realm of literature and culture could be described as being of political importance. While this usage significantly departed from Glissant's own terminology, it was indirectly supported by the fact that Glissant often-times, but inconsistently, referred to such a broader understanding of the political himself.

Working with the politics of relation as an analytical concept not only made several additional layers of political action in Glissant's work visible that had hitherto been, quite generally, discussed as expressing an ethical stance or decolonial commitment on his part. It also, more importantly, turned Glissant's oeuvre as a whole into an object of study, not just the texts in which he directly engaged with issues pertaining to established political systems. The analytical focus thus shifted away from Glissant's own support of, or opposition to, specific political actors and organisations towards an exploration of a multiplicity of ways in which his work can be conceived as exerting an influence in relation to communities, some of which might not even be established as such. In contrast to the first approach summarised above, the characteristics of this politics of relation were more difficult to discern. As touched upon at the onset of this section, when it is applied to Glissant's own textual and non-textual practices as an analytic lens, the politics of relation renders the following character traits of Glissant's political practice visible: a political practice that is invested in inventing new modes of political practice by interrogating the past, and thereby creating an alternative sense of history that could lay new discursive foundations for future communities (chapter 2), a political practice that seeks to model the set-up of these new communities along the normative standards of the philosophy of relation (chapter 4) and, by doing so, aims to overcome the Manichaeism of a colonial worldview towards the acknowledgement of a

world that is undergoing an unpredictable process of creolisation (chapter 3).

Instead of proclaiming that 'everything in his work is political', which would render the adjective meaningless, a main task in the analysis of these different characteristics was to identify its general direction. The notion of marronage, which subsumed the complexity of Glissant's work to a single notion ('everything is related to one thing'), proved to be a productive angle to take, although it implied a dramatic gesture of reduction of a thinker whose work was, perhaps above all, committed to upholding a sense of irreducibility.

6.1.3. The Politics of Relation as a Movement of Marronage

In addition to the first two conceptions, a more abstract employment of Glissant's politics of relation was at the basis of a third approach that was mainly pursued in chapter 5. This perspective assumed the movement of marronage, as conceptualised and performed by Glissant, to denote a more general and abstract political model. What sparked the study of the implications of this third conceptualisation was the question pertaining to the forms a politics of relation could take in response to key debates in postcolonial political theory and the conviction that there is a need to demystify the meaning of some of Glissant's poetic invocations to position his work in a larger political theoretical landscape. Part of this analytical work involved a deliberate counter-balancing of a singularity that has been accorded to Glissant by several scholars, a sense to which Glissant contributed himself by keeping a discursive distance from some of the most prominent intellectual currents and movements of his time, and by developing a largely self-referential vocabulary and a deliberately opaque style of writing. This line of research essentially responded to the third question underlying this research, namely the question *how* Glissant's political work relates to other political positions and currents, a question which I will also take up again in section 6.3. Through this prism, Glissant's politics of relation appeared to share important characteristics with a black radical political tradition to which a transformation of the whole, in the sense of the imaginary basis of what it means to be human, is a more urgent task than the struggle for reformations in a given political system. This commitment to rethink the epistemological and ontological basis of politics, strongly emerged as a defining characteristic of Glissant's movement of marronage in contrast to other models of flight and exodus that have been developed in a European context (5.1.). Moreover, Glissant's marronage also emerged as conceptual move away from critical and pragmatic engagements with existing political institutions towards the exploration of utopian and creative alternatives to them (5.2., 5.3., 5.4.).

By framing the different meanings of the politics of relation in this manner, my response to the main question driving this research was that Glissant's politics of relation is or can refer to all elements of all three of these conceptualisations. This means that, at times, the normative dimension

inherent in Glissant's own theorisation reappeared in the description of his own political practice, and, in an even more deliberate fashion, in Glissant's own conceptualisation of marronage, which I used to describe his politics of relation. Having thus formulated a response to how the politics of relation can be understood on a general level, its specific nature, implications and potential contributions still warrant to be summarised. The following sections will take up this task by, firstly, outlining its versatile and multilayered nature as a defining characteristic (6.2.) and by, secondly, discussing its some of the implications of Glissant's intellectual marronage (6.3.), as a way of tying together some of the open threads branching off the three conceptual dimensions of the politics of relation.

6.2. Across the Lines – The Versatile Nature of Glissant's Politics of Relation

A defining characteristic of Glissant's politics of relation is its multilayeredness and multidimensionality. These different layers and dimensions refer not only to the different extents to which certain practices are visible to larger audiences, but also to different geographic, institutional, and temporal scales, as well as to the different formats and media in which the political dimension of Glissant's work was expressed. I disentangled these different levels throughout this study by loosely structuring the arguments presented in the three main analytic chapters (2, 3 and 4) in such a way that they proceeded from a discussion of more opaque, text-based and less visible to more transparent, extra-textual and visible political practices through which Glissant exposed his work to a larger public. At this point, I will describe these different dimensions and their relations to one another in a more concentrated and ordered fashion. To structure this discussion I will, in a first step, engage with the varying degrees of visibility of Glissant's political practice and (6.2.1.), secondly, address the different scales (institutional, geographical, temporal) as well as the modes of expression that I perceive to be largely contingent on the question of visibility (6.2.2.). In the process, I will identify particular moments and issues that triggered particular shifts in visibility in Glissant's political practice, and reflect on how this translated into the forms and timing of concrete interventions. In a third step, and as a way of summarising the presentation of this section, I will present a vignette which, in my view, demonstrates the versatile nature Glissant's politics of relation in a particularly succinct manner (6.2.3.)

6.2.1. Across the Lines of Visibility – From the Poem's Opacity to the Poet's Public Interventions

At the onset of this thesis I argued that, what conventionally counts as political action would have to be expanded from a narrow understanding of 'politics' tied to engagements with the political system, towards a broader understanding that includes questions pertaining to literary, aesthetic as well as cultural issues, a point I made with reference to the works of Jacques Rancière and the black radical tradition (1.2.2., 1.2.3.). Due to its disposition to engage with different dimensions of the political realm, it made sense for me to broadly distinguish Glissant's political practices along their differing degrees of visibility, which could also be termed as varying degrees of exposure or transparency to larger audiences. Writing about Glissant's politics in terms of visibility might appear misleading, since as a poet and writer Glissant was relatively visible throughout most of his career. Where I find the notion of visibility nevertheless useful is to denote a conscious decision on his part to connect the political project inherent in his literature with the kind of organisational work and public interventions that express his politics in a different medium than writing. This means

that, while my work explicitly does not reaffirm a distinction between writing and activism as *separate* forms of political action, and instead argues that these two modes of action need to be seen as inseparable, I do consider it important to acknowledge a *difference* between modes of politics, a difference that can, in part, be formulated in terms of degrees of opacity or transparency, or in terms of visibility or exposure, as well as in terms of being situated in the context of different temporalities, as I will outline in the following sub-section (6.2.2.).

Glissant's political practice can, in this sense, be perceived as ranging from the obscure or opaque depths of the sea of everything that is of political importance about his work to, at times, smaller or larger rocks emerging above the waterline, which here stands for actions in a non-textual realm that intervene in relatively highly publicised political affairs. If this metaphor is shifted from a vertical to a horizontal imagery, one could also consider his politics of relation to operate on a *conceptual continuum*, ranging from the letter or the sign, as the smallest unit, up to established political organisations or systems, as the largest unit of analysis, without there being a hierarchy between them. In between these extreme points I would group such aspects as the main themes of a book (e.g. marronage), the proposition of a specific philosophical concept in writing (e.g. opacity), the teaching of a particular conception of history at the university (e.g. Faulkner's interpretation of the curse haunting the US-South), the creation of an institution of learning (e.g. the *Institut martiniquais d'études*) and knowledge creation and dissemination (e.g. the *Institut du Tout-Monde*), leading up to appearances or interventions in mainstream media and collaborations with state institutions (e.g. around the national museum project dedicated to the *Mémoires des esclavages* in 2007). This characteristic of Glissant's political practice, which could also be cast as a specific form of *mobility*, provokes the question *when* Glissant's political practice shifted from one degree of in/visibility or opacity/transparency to another? Put more bluntly, when did Glissant opt to emerge from the opaque depths of his poetry to appearances on national television? In what could be perceived as a (non-Foucauldian) archeology of Glissant's political archive, the most visible practices have already been acknowledged by a wide range of Glissant scholars and are generally referred to as activism or political commentary (1.3.2.). While being cognisant of these aspects, this study was mainly concerned with uncovering those dimensions of his work that have hitherto been relegated as non-political, literary or poetic.

In the process of this study, a pattern could be discerned about particular moments in which Glissant sought to become more visible with his work, although this pattern is not at all mechanic or systematic. Among the events that triggered Glissant to cross the permeable lines of visibility – moments that I have touched upon at the onset of this study with reference to Chamoiseau's anecdote about the permeable border between writing and action and 'certain things' that Glissant

'could not not do' (1.1.) – a commonality was that they were, at a fundamental level, concerned with *the question of the communities* that Glissant considered himself to belong to. Somewhat similar to Rancière, who also claims that true political moments are a relatively rare occurrence, and that they can take the form of both small and larger acts, these moments placed the question of who belongs and who does not belong to a political community at the forefront of debate. In a similar vein, the findings of this thesis, made it possible to identify a set of events that counted for Glissant as being of particular political importance. For Glissant, these communities are *not only* to be understood in a literal sense of his place of origin (Martinique) or nationality (France), *but also* more broadly as problem-spaces with which he was personally familiar and in which he perceived the process of creolisation, which he abstracted from the historic experience of the Caribbean, to unfold in ways that could have important repercussions on the level of the Tout-Monde. It is in this sense, and not as a categorical statement of non-intervention, that I understand his assertion “*je n'interviens jamais dans la manière dont les gens débrouillent le fil de leur lieu. On ne peut pas débrouiller le fil d'un lieu à la place de ceux qui y vivent*”⁴⁹² (IPD 99), an assertion to which I will return below (6.3.1).

As I have mentioned at the onset of this chapter in the commentary to the map illustrating Glissant's intellectual marronage, the 1960s, when the question of an autonomous Martinican nation-hood was at stake and when Glissant joined the *Front des Antillais et Guyanais pour l'Autonomie*, provided such a moment. The 1970s again sparked the need to intervene publicly on his part, this time in the form of the set of cultural interventions organised under the umbrella of the *Institut martiniquais d'études* and the CARIFESTA cultural festivals. The early 2000s also produced numerous occasions to which Glissant responded through a series of public interventions, such as when the movement around the memorialisation of the slave trade in 1998 gained momentum. In Glissantian terms, at stake in these moments was the possibility of transforming France from a neocolonial metropole into a relation-nation (5.3.1). The same could be said about the large-scale labour strikes in Guadeloupe in 2009, which threw the debate about the social inequalities and institutional status of the French Departments open after decades of stagnation and simmering tension (4.1.2.). In a slightly different light, Glissant perceived Barack Obama's electoral campaign in 2008 as a political event to be of significance for the way it briefly opened up a utopian dimension in geopolitical affairs and the possibility of the kind of imaginary world-communities that were dear to him to assert themselves in institutionalised politics.

Taking up the metaphor of the sea, I suggest to view these events as the tip of the larger volcanic rock of Glissant's political practice, tipping points emerging above sea-level, where Glissant perceived an opening, a possibility for a change in the collective imaginary to take place.

492 “I never intervene in other places like the people who untangle the threads of their own places. One cannot untangle the threads of a place like the people who live in it”, my translation.

They were based on his intuition that something fundamental was at stake in the way the 'tectonic plates' that change world-history in unpredictable, creolising, ways are aligned. These relatively rare occurrences, of which I have only cited the most prominent ones, stand out in a sea of more desperate times where the struggle for the kind of world-communities Glissant defended, continued less visibly, underground or, in Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's term, in the 'undercommons' (5.1.3.): in literature, among friends, in small cultural events, in the class room, in small networks of solidarity, and in the organisations Glissant created. While this work took place on an ongoing basis, for Glissant it was a matter of timing, of knowing when to change gears, so to say, and intervene in a more public manner. By describing an important aspect of the politics of relation's versatility in this manner, it is important to re-emphasise that, I did not treat these moments of public political engagements as more *important*, but as connected to and as potentially amplifying the effects of a larger political project that remained mainly 'subterranean'.

6.2.2. From Planetary to Local Time and Back – Adjusting the Modes of Struggle

Three closely connected queries arise from the above description of the mobility of Glissant's politics of relation across different shades of visibility. In my view, these issues concern the different senses of temporality, institutional and geographic scales, and genres or tools that correspond to the varying degrees of 'publicity' of Glissant's political action. I will in the following address each of them in turn.

The different layers of visibility of Glissant's political practice, which I specified in the previous sub-section, are intimately connected to different conceptions of time. With regards to the sense of time in which Glissant placed the work of poets, this thesis repeatedly pointed out that parts of Glissant's poetic work could be perceived as contributing to political transformations on the largest time-frame imaginable. With Wai-Chee Dimock this duration is called planetary time or the history of human kind. Another relevant time-frame for Glissant refers to the roughly 500 year long history of the *Tout-Monde* that began with Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas, a historic event that set in motion the history of slavery, colonialism and, with them, the forces of creolisation. If these larger temporal dimensions were occluded, and one would evaluate the successes and failures of Glissant's immediate political actions in the span of several years or even a lifetime, a significant dimension of the changes Glissant considered himself to be contributing towards would be ignored. Glissant's political engagements would then appear as a list of failures, comprising among others: Martinique's ongoing status as French Department, the political segregation of Caribbean islands, the *Institut martiniquais d'études*' transformation from a 'utopian phalanstery' (Noudelmann) into a private school, the cancellation of his project for a national

museum for the memorialisation of the slave trade in France, and the *Institut du Tout-Monde's* ongoing financial struggles for survival.

Seeing the same initiatives in the light of longer temporality, might, however, reveal that his political archive carries the potential that, at another point in time, new initiatives might draw inspiration from these apparent failures, and from Glissant's political archive, as a point of reference for future political action. This aspect, which could be framed as the political potential of failure, could also be linked to Aimé Césaire's notion of an 'optimistic tragedy' which he associated with the 'miraculous weapons'. Speaking about his theatre play *La Tragédie du roi Christophe* (1963), set in Haiti 1806, Césaire said about the declining fortunes of his historic protagonist:

“It is true that Christoph lost, but he failed in the present, in the short time, but in the long term, and that is my personal optimism, I think he is successful. His victory is historical, not in the present [...] The hero is not really dead, because his weapons are miraculous, his weapons are not chipped, they are still of use”⁴⁹³ (Maldoror 1976).

Similar to Césaire's optimism, Glissant's philosophy of relation is compatible with the belief in a historical dimension, a *longue durée* in which oblique continuations and spiritual affiliations impact political affairs. With this being said, Glissant also shifted from this expansive sense of time, where political effectivity becomes impossible to measure, into the present tense, local time or into the temporality of nationalist chronology. This became apparent in several instances where Glissant decided to intervene in a more public or more widely visible manner, several cases of which I have cited in the preceding sub-section.

Similar to the issue pertaining to the time-frame in which Glissant's political actions can be placed, one can also interrogate the scale of the political on which it operated in institutional and geographic terms. In this regard my study demonstrated that it is, once more, impossible to limit Glissant to a singular realm. While some of his interventions directly engaged with the system of the nation-state, such as his project for a museum of slavery in France (2.3.2.), others operated below or above it (e.g. the *Institut martiniquais d'études*, or the *International Parliament of Writers*). Moreover, in my study of the communities Glissant sought to create, I placed a strong emphasis on how his 'world-communities' operated in the non-conventional political realm of the imaginary, as communities comprised of individuals who (knowingly or unknowingly) share a relational imaginary, be it in the form of a fictional community of the Batouto (4.3.2.) or the readership of a cultural journal, such as the *UNESCO Courier* (4.4.1.). In all cases, it was important to underline that a main characteristic of Glissant's politics of relation was to not categorically reject

⁴⁹³“C'est vrai que Christophe échue, mais il échue dans l'immédiat, au cours terme, mais à long terme je crois, et c'est mon optimisme à moi, je crois qu'en vérité c'est lui qui l'emporte. Sa victoire et dans l'histoire, elle n'est pas dans l'immédiat. [...] L'héros n'est pas vraiment mort, car ces armes sont miraculeuses, et ces armes sont pas ébréchés ils peuvent encore servir”, my translation.

any of these levels per se, but to move across and maintain strategic relations with them.

A similar dynamic could be discerned with regards to its geographical scale. While some initiatives were clearly 'local' in nature, confined to the island or the region, and marked by a strong emphasis on local particularity (Antillanité) (4.1.2., 5.1.2.), others were overtly global or international in scope, such as the *International Parliament of Writers* (4.4.2.), while yet again others engaged in national political debates, such as the issue of French immigration policy (5.3.1.). Although a general privileging of the global dimension was identified in Glissant's work over time, the lens adopted in my study also underlined the zigzagging motion of global and local political projects over time, as reiterated in the comments on the illustration 8 (6.0.). More importantly, it described the constant point of reference, for both kinds of initiatives as an orientation towards a particular perception of the world as Tout-Monde (3.3.3.).

The dynamic I have described with regards to the adaptability and mobility of Glissant's political practice across different institutional and geographic scales also applies to the tools, that is the modes of struggle as well as formats or media in which Glissant wrote and expressed his ideas. In the course of the more than 60 years of Glissant's literary career the geopolitical landscape, institutional setups and information technological possibilities changed drastically.

In terms of the modes of struggle, Glissant's adaption to the changing power configurations around Martinique and the Caribbean, which I described in terms of a shift from a commitment to autonomy to the potentials of interdependence and non-sovereignty (4.1.2.), is a case in point. It shows how Glissant perceived the need to adjust strategies of resistance to a global framework, where 'the enemy' had in his view transformed from a clearly defined colonial opponent to an increasingly invisible force operating 'everywhere and nowhere' (TTM 177). Glissant's privileging of the realm of the imaginary has to be seen against this world-historic background, as much as a response to a particular local configuration of power in the Antilles, where the route for radical institutional transformation is effectively blocked.

While the strategies of resistance had to adjust, so did the ways of expression and circulation of ideas. While, in the 1960s, poetry was perceived as an important and influential medium of expression associated with prominent poets and Négritude leaders, such as Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Léon-Gontran Damas who all eventually occupied powerful political positions, the genre became increasingly marginalised in the course of the 20th century. While Glissant could claim to intervene in the discursive foundation of the Caribbean with his publication of the long form poem *Les Indes* in 1965, the popularity or even 'efficacy' of poetry as political weapon decreased over time. Although its relevance has remained constant in the larger temporality of the Tout-Monde, according to Glissant, the lacking reception of his poetry might have contributed to a

decrease in poetic output in the course of the years on his part.

A similar development has affected the role of theatre, about which Glissant wrote in the 1970s that 'there cannot be a nation without a theatre' (ACOMA 2, 42). Today, these assertions sound antiquated, and the fact that after *Monsieur Toussaint* (1961), Glissant did not produce another play that was staged, confirms the sense that Glissant also adjusted his viewpoint on this subject. Glissant's continuous investment in the writing of essays and novels (as forms in which Glissant combined various literary genres) can, on the other hand, be interpreted as a response to a changing media and intellectual landscape, in which the impact of the essay and the novel has not diminished over time. In the words of the Barbadian novelist George Lamming, the contemporary political usefulness of the novel lies in what he refers to as the 'education of feeling', which he distinguishes from abstract arguments 'aimed at the mind' that are expressed in lectures or essays, "fiction on the other hand is devised in such a way [as to] aim not at the mind [but] directly at the area of feeling, but with the device of making the feeling think" (2002, 198).

Having noted these aspects, it is important to emphasise that the point here is neither to instrumentalise or assign political importance to every literary decision Glissant's part, nor do I want to claim that he produced writing in response to 'what worked best' with his readership or according to the 'demands of the market'.⁴⁹⁴ If that were the case Glissant would have adjusted his writing style to a more transparent prose at the very onset of his career. Instead, this study argued that Glissant's reliance on fiction is politically significant in terms of its ability to construct a world of the imagination, and imaginary communities comprising fictional and non-fictional characters, into which readers are pulled by perform a relational imagination in the very act of reading (4.2.3.).⁴⁹⁵ Another dynamic that could be identified in terms of the different usage of media, is what I described as his effort to re-inscribe extra-textual activities into texts and vice versa as a way of reinforcing their effect in the long run. The website of the *Institut du Tout-Monde* has, in that respect, emerged as a particular important archive for his political practice.

While the versatile characteristics of Glissant's politics of relation, which I have here described in terms of *mobility*, *adaptability* and *malleability*, can be discerned in his work at large, the awareness of these specificities also allows one to detect them more clearly in smaller fragments or vignettes, such as the anecdote presented in the following sub-section, which will open up this

494 Consider in this respect Glissant's statement that he perceived himself to 'write in waves': "*Je crois que j'écris par vagues. Dans chacune, il y a à peu près un ou deux romans, un ou deux recueils de poèmes et un ou deux essais, parce que j'ai écrit beaucoup d'essais*" (I think I write in waves. In each one, there are more or less one or two novels, one or two collections of poetry, and one or two essays, because I've written many essays", (Couffon and Glissant 2001, 35), a statement that implies a more organic writing practice, relatively unperturbed by external interference.

495 Pertaining to other media that Glissant increasingly entertained in the course of his life, François Noudelmann's account also alludes to a dynamic that led Glissant to deliberately choose to 'perform' in front of larger audiences, such as the documentary by Manthia Diawara (2009) that was allegedly directly geared towards reaching larger, US-American, and non-academic audiences (2.3.2.).

presentation to the consideration of intellectual practices outside Glissant's work that could be conceived as performing a politics of relation.

6.2.3. A Lesson in Relational Politics – Manthia Diawara's 'Orchestrated' Encounter

A particularly fitting illustration of the multilayered character of Glissant's politics of relation is relayed by the film-maker and cultural theorist Manthia Diawara in his essay *Édouard Glissant's Worldmentality – An Introduction to 'One World in Relation'* (2015), which forms part of what I have conceptualised as the collective practice of life-writing around Glissant's person. In the essay Diawara recounts the anecdote of how he met Glissant during a conference dedicated to the political dimension of his work in 2008, a conference that was organised by Glissant's *Institut du Tout-Monde* (3.3.3.). Diawara remembers how, on that occasion, Glissant 'completely orchestrated' a meeting between himself and a 'man from Mali' who introduced himself as Soumara. In the time leading up to the event, Glissant and some of his friends had allegedly lobbied against the deportation of Soumara and several hundred of his Malian compatriots. After, at first, being anxious of the encounter since it appeared to be exclusively based on the fact that Soumara and Diawara came from the same region and spoke the same language (Sinonke), Diawara found out that Soumara mainly wanted him to pass on a message of thanks to Glissant and to tell him on his behalf that, although he did not speak French he understood what Glissant's philosophy of relation was all about. The lesson Diawara drew from the encounter was that, “they both wanted me to relay a message to the other, that they were using me as yet another pathway, not a cleared road, but the trace of one, for their relation”. In terms of the philosophy and politics of relation, the brief encounter on the sidelines of an academic conference can be seen as more than the re-affirmation of a personal relationship between Glissant and Diawara. Through Diawara's rendition of the story it also turns into a way of discursively re-establishing a connection between Glissant's philosophy and an African world-view, a connection that survived the rupture of the transatlantic slave trade, in world-historic terms, and which has featured as a sub-theme in this study (2.1.2., 5.2., 5.4.).

Zooming out of this brief and intimate encounter, Glissant's attempt at 'teaching' Diawara this 'relational lesson' reveals several characteristics of Glissant's politics of relation that I have identified in the previous two sub-sections. It includes, not only, the creation of an institution, the *Institut du Tout-Monde*, that allows for these kinds of encounters to take place. On a non-textual level, it also includes the humanitarian practice of actively lobbying against the violent state practice of deportation. On a textual level, the event can, moreover, be brought in connection with the publication of several texts that appeared in the immediate context of the French debate on immigration in 2007, first in the form of a series newspaper articles and shortly afterwards as the

political pamphlet co-written with Chamoiseau, *Quand les murs tombent* (2006) – a text to which one could also add the monograph *Une nouvelle région du monde* (2005), which, by combining poetry and theory prefigures the main arguments in the pamphlet. In this brief encounter, the politics of relation moves swiftly from Tout-Monde-time, by affirming a transatlantic bond of philosophic kinship, to the urgent issue of violent state practices endured by African migrants in France. Through the publication of Diawara's text and the placement of articles in French mainstream newspapers, and even onto French national television shows, the issue also shifts from the privacy of the interpersonal encounter to the public or national domain. In terms of geographical scale, one can also note a transition from the global issue of migrant's rights, which Glissant framed more abstractly as his new border thought (5.2.), to the concrete (local) case of a small community faced with the prospect of deportation.

While I consider this episode to be particularly striking for the way it encapsulates the various dimensions of Glissant's political practice identified throughout this thesis, it also lays bare some of its limitations. Not only is it apparent that the reach or quantifiable impact of this kind of political practice is limited, it is also largely confined to an interpersonal or what is usually considered a symbolic level. Its effects, its actual influence on the legislation of policies are impossible to measure. But, as I indicated by outlining the conceptual framework of the poet's politics as the framework, in which this kind of practice is most adequately situated, the mixture of action and writing, of theory and practice can be attributed a 'total' political value. Giving it a name, calling it a politics of relation, is a way of acknowledging this value and thereby freeing political action from the imperative to be as effective as possible. Working with the notion of the politics of relation thus becomes a way of bridging the artificial separation between politics and literature without disavowing that there are different modes of doing politics that need to be acknowledged as such. In the course of this study, I have cited the works of individual artists and writers (4.3.2.), networks of solidarity (4.4.2.), and even military or institutionalised political communities (5.4.3.), as cases in which such a *mélange* of poetic and political work is at play. Some of the possible applications of the notion of the politics of relation in the realms of postcolonial literary and postcolonial studies will be spelled out in section 6.4.

This section summed up the key characteristics of Glissant's politics, thereby directly responding to the argument brought forward at the onset of this thesis, namely that one of the main interests of this study was geared towards describing postcolonial political practices that remain invisible or unnamed when seen through the conceptual lens of 'activism' or 'political literature'. The following section debates the implications of Glissant's politics of relation in the context of postcolonial debates concerning the issues of universalism, relativism and the role of binary patterns

of thought, and, in so doing, ties together several threads and possible points of contention that have resurfaced across the chapters of this study.

6.3. The Forces and Enemies of the Living or the 'Hard Line' of the Politics of Relation

In the course of this thesis and in the previous sections, I have repeatedly emphasised the non-divisive and inclusive nature of Glissant work by describing it in terms of mobility, adaptability and permeability. While these characteristics can be cast in a positive light, as demonstrating a democratic commitment to non-exclusion and non-violence, they could also be cast as problematic in the context of political struggles where a clear line of conflict, a clear pattern of oppression or exploitation can be discerned, and where the most urgent question is one of clearly identifying the political opponent in order to formulate effective strategies of resistance. While this problematic has remained a sub-theme throughout this thesis, I want to address this issue more directly at the end of this thesis, taking into account the findings of this research. Further discussing this particular aspect of Glissant's work serves to emphasise, on the one hand, that the politics of relation is not an 'anything goes' approach – despite the fact that Relation comprises violent and harmonious encounters on an abstract philosophical level. On the other hand, an awareness of this particularity is a productive basis on which Glissant's politics of relation can be brought in conversation with political struggles that are openly divisive, based on singular political identities and committed to the protection of concretely defined national, religious or cultural communities. As this line of inquiry will show, identifying the oppositional logic underlying Glissant's political work in more explicit terms is an important aspect of this work. As I will argue in this section, this oppositional logic hinges on the conceptual binary between the so-called 'forces' and 'enemies of the living', between political actors and communities who can accept and those who reject differences. To demonstrate this point and its implications, the first sub-section interrogates the role played by binary conceptions in Glissant's politics of relation by setting it in conversation with postcolonial debates concerning the issues of universalism and cultural relativism (6.3.1.). In a second step I discuss the kind of contributions Glissant's blend of universalist and relativist positions could make in response to specific political struggles (6.3.2.).

6.3.1. The Relational Binary at the Basis of Glissant's Non-Universal-Universalism

This sub-section responds to hypothetical criticism levelled against my depiction of Glissant's politics as expressing a non-decisive and non-committed political stance, by placing his politics in the context of postcolonial debates on conceptual binarisms and the debate between universalism and relativism. In the realm of Glissant scholarship, this line of work can be perceived as responding directly to the shadow Peter Hallward's criticism of Glissant's alleged 'depoliticisation' cast over the 'late phase' of his career in particular (1.3.1). Two of Glissant's

statements, whose importance I have re-emphasised throughout this work, will guide this discussion. The first statement is taken from *Poétique de la Relation* where Glissant claimed that the respect for 'specific opacities' could reconcile “the hard line inherent in any politics and the questioning essential to any relation” (PR 194). In the same passage, Glissant also wrote that 'Plato's vision is for Plato' and the 'griot's town is for the griot' and that “Nothing prohibits our seeing them in confluence, without confusing them in some magma or reducing them to each other” (PR 194). The second statement appears at the beginning of the *Anthologie du Tout-Monde* where Glissant asserted that “It is true that what the enemies of the living are afraid of is not totality but diversity, not alterity but the strange and pressing *mixité*”⁴⁹⁶ (ATM 14). Bearing in mind the work pursued throughout its individual chapters, the political implications of these statements can be discerned with greater clarity at the conclusion of this study. In my view, they are a testimony to the peculiar mix of non-binary and binary, universalist and relativist thought that marks Glissant's politics of relation. To trace the reasoning behind this point of view, I will firstly recall Glissant's ambivalent stance on binaries and secondly his positioning vis-à-vis the issue of universalism.

The Hidden Binary of Glissant's Politics of Relation

In his books *Black Skins White Masks* (2008) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Frantz Fanon famously described the Manichean character of the colonial project as dividing the world into black and white, native and settler, good and evil, human and non-human. Escaping from this dichotomous logic while still being able to formulate effective political responses to the (neo)colonial project has since become a main preoccupation of post- and decolonial intellectual and activist movements committed to the articulation of modes of subversion and resistance against asymmetric configurations of power (Kerner 2010, 145-49).

At several moments of this thesis I emphasised how Glissant's work was committed to unsettling some of the fundamental conceptual binaries, oppositions and generalisations inherited from the colonial enterprise. Among them was a troubling of the opposition between scientific knowledge and the work of the imagination (2.2.), a shift away from the social opposition of slaves and maroons, colonisers and colonised as metaphysical antagonists (4.2.2.), and the bridging of the binary between the human and natural world (3.2.3.). On an aesthetic level, I have moreover remarked how Glissant's writing style transcended the divisions of prose and poetry and was modelled on the 'baroque chaos' of the Caribbean flora and fauna, Glissant's work produced openings through which new modes of political practices could be formulated in such diverse realms as knowledge production, historiography or ecology.⁴⁹⁷ Revisiting the presence of binary and

⁴⁹⁶See 5.4.3. for original quote.

⁴⁹⁷A remarkable exception in this regard is Glissant's engagement with gender differences, an aspect to which I have alluded at several instances in my study (3.2., 4.2.). Although parts of Glissant's work can be read as an attempt towards blurring the dichotomous nature of gender binaries, his work does not escape an essentialised differentiation between male and feminine

non-binary thinking in Glissant's work more closely at the end of this study takes up the theme of the 'fourth line of flight', which I introduced (1.4.3.) as cutting across the three main lines of flight to which I have dedicated one chapter each. This additional movement, which operates primarily on an epistemological level, generally proceeded from a modernist logic of binary oppositions to a relational imagination.

Attributing a non-binarity mode of thinking to Glissant appears to be both self-evident as it may be surprising. In terms of the former point of view, one need only point out the importance Glissant placed on mixing, chaos and unpredictability inherent in his notions of creolisation, rhizomatic identities or *Tout-Monde*. Concerning the latter point of view, one could argue that most of these Glissantian concepts are themselves presented in an oppositional fashion: mundanity as opposed to globalisation, creolisation as opposed to cultural homogeneity, rhizomatic identity as opposed to single-roots identities. Conscious of the centrality of this reoccurring theme, Glissant addressed the issue of binary conceptions in *Poétique de la relation* where he asserted that the imaginary proceeds in a non-linear and non-binarity fashion, namely in the form of a spiral:

“from one circularity to the next, it encounters new spaces and does not transform them into either depths or conquests. Nor is it confined to the binarities that have seemed to preoccupy me throughout this book: extension/filiation, transparency/opacity... The imaginary becomes complete on the margins of every new linear projection. It creates a network and constitutes volume. Binarities only serve as conveniences for approaching it” (PR 199).

Glissant's usage of conceptual oppositions is here cast as allowing him to approach a greater degree of complexity that cannot be captured by 'linear projections'.⁴⁹⁸ In a footnote to the same passage, Glissant listed a set of binaries about which he speculated 'whether or not they can be transcended' (PR 223). Among the binaries on the list are oppositions such as “Transparency – Opacity”, “Grasping (*comprendre*) – giving-on-and-with (*donner avec*)”, “History – histories”, “Root identity – relation identity” and “Relay agents – flash agents” (PR 223-24). Are these binaries in fact transcended in Glissant's work or are they reinforced? And what is the relation between them?

Looking for a response to these questions, one could turn to Glissant's argument that, not only did he rely on binaries for the sake of 'convenience', but that his philosophy is *appositional* rather than oppositional in nature. Writing about the opposition between creolisation and the idea of oneness (*unicité*) he wrote in *Mémoires des esclavages*:

character qualities, a dichotomy that is incompatible with strands of queer theory and feminism that problematise essentialised male and female identities as well as heteronormativity. For a critical study of Glissant's work that engages with this blind spot see Rachel A. Rothendler's *Plaisir et jouissance – Le vécu Martiniquais* (2015), Arlette Gautier's *Les soeurs de Solitude – la condition féminine dans l'esclavage aux Antilles du XVIIe au XIXe siècle* (1985), and Max Hantel's *Toward a Sexual Difference Theory of Creolization* (2014).

⁴⁹⁸A similar approach to binaries features in Deleuze and Guattari's introduction to *Thousand Plateaus* (1987, 20-21).

*“La réponse est que nous n'opposons rien, que nous apposons. Dans la Relation, toutes les variations d'identité sont vivables, les continents fréquentent les archipels, sans qu'il faille qu'ils les étouffent: ce que la réalité de la créolisation combat est l'imposition d'une seule manière de fréquenter le monde, d'une seule manière de se rapporter à autrui, et peut-être d'une seule manière de se concevoir soi-même”*⁴⁹⁹ (ME 175).

Employing the subtle difference between the words opposition and apposition, the former implying a conflictual, exclusivist relation, and the latter a non-conflictual placing side-by-side, Glissant in this statement simultaneously disavowed and affirmed the oppositional character of his philosophy. In terms of the binaries mentioned above, for Glissant the opposition was not between those who adhere to a singular and evolutionary notion of “History” and those who believe in a multiplicity of spiralling “histories” (see also 2.2.), but between those who claim that there is only *one universally valid way* of thinking about the past, and those who defend the point of view that there are *several equally valid ways* of thinking about it. Referring back to Glissant's claim cited at the onset of this study about the 'fear of diversity' harboured by the 'enemies of the living', the political opposition that remains, that is not transcended, by Glissant's politics of relation is a confrontation between those who adhere to a Manichean view of the world and those who strive to develop a more relational imagination. In terms of the general concern of this sub-section, this is how the opposition between the forces and enemies of the living, and the 'hard line' that reconciles the antagonistic element of decolonial politics with the questioning essential to relation, can be understood.

Apposed or Opposed? The Relation Between the Forces and Enemies of the Living

Affirming the presence of this hidden or implicit opposition at the basis of Glissant's political work in this manner does, however, not yet reveal Glissant's perception of the dynamic between these opposing world-views. Further interrogating the difference between apposition and opposition can be instructive in that regard. Bearing in mind the main findings about the characteristics of Glissant's intellectual marronage, the notion of appositionality can, for example, be linked to the notions of 'strategic entanglement', as it has been described with reference to Yarimar Bonilla's conception of the maroon's zigzag movements between the safety of the hills and the plantation system (4.1.2.), a pattern that has also been identified in historical scholarship on marronage (2.1.1.), and played an important role in Glissant's fictional work (3.1.1., 4.2.2.). A similar pattern re-emerged with reference to the work of Fred Moten and Stefano Harney to whom contemporary modes of working physically and imaginatively both in- and outside 'the system' are

⁴⁹⁹“The answer is that we are not opposing anything, we are apposing. All kinds of identities can be lived in Relation, the continents frequent the archipelagos, without smothering them: what the reality of creolisation is combatting is the imposition of a singular way of being in the world, a singular way of engaging with ones surroundings, and perhaps a singular way of conceiving oneself”, my translation.

forms of strategic entanglement practiced in the 'undercommons', as lines of flight towards an imaginary 'meta-out' operating outside the inside-outside binary established by the metaphorical plantation (5.1.3.). In Glissant's terminology of apposition and opposition, these modes of strategic entanglement are opposed to a political system against which they resist, but they do not perform this opposition in an aggressive or confrontative manner – nor do they suggest the possibility of a radical rupture with the West as alluded to by Walter Mignolo's decolonial project of delinking (5.1.3.).

Moved into the concrete institutional-political realm, the appositionality of Glissant's politics could, moreover, be interpreted as a resistance against conjuring up a clash between political communities defending diversity (metaphorical archipelagos) and communities promoting the value of sameness (metaphorical continents). Instead, Glissant's argument implies that metaphorical archipelagos and continents can live side-by-side with one another, in a convivial manner, the former cultivating an imaginary of multiplicity and openness, the latter an imaginary of oneness and closure. Despite affirming the difference between the forces and enemies of the living as the hard line of the politics of relation, as I have done above, this kind of dissociation does not provide the legitimisation for an armed conflict between these two forces. The political division of the world Glissant's philosophy draws up is therefore not a version of Samuel Huntington's infamous thesis of a 'clash of civilisations', because in every civilisation, in every country, culture and part of the world, there are individuals and collectives that cultivate an imaginary of relation in Glissant's view. Like in his portrayal of the fictional Batouto – the people who have 'chosen that you cannot see them'⁵⁰⁰ (OD 168), who have 'no power, no army, no finances and do not intervene anywhere'⁵⁰¹ (SAT 275) –, the 'forces of the living' are neither organised in a political body, nor are they aware of their collective identity. But Glissant's work does not categorically reject this possibility.

In geopolitical terms, Glissant's insistence on the possibility that metaphorical archipelagos and continents can live side-by-side appears utopian at best. The non-violent and reconciliatory thrust of Glissant's politics of relation can, in this context, be criticised for not taking the power asymmetries and different intentions between those who have 'no power, no army, no finances and do not intervene anywhere', and influential political and economic organisations whose main goal is expansion and control into account. Instead of taking Glissant's claim that “All kinds of identities can be lived in Relation” literally, as expressing a power-blind or self-effacing 'laissez-faire' attitude, I would argue that it is more productive to connect it with the political model of the small-country, or the city state, whose theoretical potentials I have discussed in 4.4.2. and 5.3. That is to say that, instead of taking the form of a confrontative or neo-imperial project with the intention of

⁵⁰⁰For the full quote refer to section 4.3.2.

⁵⁰¹For the full quote refer to section 4.3.3.

'taking over the world', the findings of this thesis show that the politics of relation is best suited to play a role below, across and above the scales of national and international politics. Its oppositionality could thus not only be perceived on a horizontal but also on a vertical plane.

The above discussion demonstrated how the inherent tension between the binary and non-binary thrust of Glissant's politics of relation cannot be completely resolved, despite Glissant's stated ambition. Instead, it allowed me to describe the 'combative' or dissociative dimension of his political thought in a fashion that is more explicit than in Glissant's own pronouncements. This aspect of his politics does not refrain from generalisations and effectively counterbalances its general disposition towards the blurring and crossing of boundaries. Placing this problematic in the larger discursive context of postcolonial debates on the issue of universalism and relativism, as I set out to do in the second part of this discussion, can, in my view, serve to better connect this aspect of Glissant's politics with other intellectual and activist movements.

Glissant's Politics of Relation as a Relativist-Universalism

In the first statement guiding this concluding discussion about the 'hard line' of Glissant's politics of relation, Glissant claimed that 'Plato's vision is for Plato' and the 'griot's town is for the griot'. This assertion implies above all that political theories and practices have to be seen in their respective socio-historic contexts, and are thus *not universally applicable*. The same statement, however also expresses a belief in a *universally applicable* relativism that respects specific opacities. This apparent contradiction extends the debate on the role of conceptual binaries in Glissant's work towards the philosophical debate between universalism and relativism, a debate that has had important resonances in postcolonial studies. By placing Glissant's work in this discursive context, my intention is to make the case that his argument about the conflict between those who adhere and those who do not adhere to a relational imaginary effectively reconciles positions that are defended by universalists and relativists alike, and thereby opens an alternative conceptual common-ground for postcolonial forms of resistances.

As several postcolonial scholars have pointed out, the generalising and binary mode of thought promoted by the colonial project – to which Glissant's fourth line of flight responded – formed part of a larger project of Western universalism. As Sylvia Wynter, among many others, has argued, the universal model of being that has been projected by the West in the course of the last 500 years was a white and heterosexual norm of 'man as man', against which the 'other' was 'black, native, poor or nonfit' (1989, 639). Against this exclusivist Western model of the universal, which Wynter calls a '*universel généralisant*' (generalising universal), she identified an anti-Universal theme in Glissant's earlier work, "the theme of the claim to specificity, of the claim to '*rester au lieu*' (the remaining-in-place) in the specific *oikumene* of the Antilles" (639). While I concur that

Glissant was indeed against the kind of 'generalising universalism' rejected by Wynter, it is also important to underline the 'non-universal universal' dimension inherent in his conception of the Tout-Monde (1.4.1.). The main characteristic of this *alternative universalism* becomes apparent in the following quote where Glissant set out to explain that:

“Relation is made up of all the differences in the world and that we shouldn't forget a single one of them, even the smallest. If you forget the tiniest difference in the world, well, Relation is no longer Relation. Now, what do we do when we believe this? We call into question, in a formal manner, the idea of the universal. The universal is a sublimation, an abstraction that enables us to forget small differences; we drift upon the universal and forget these small differences, and Relation is wonderful because it doesn't allow us to do that. There is no such thing as a Relation made up of big differences. Relation is total; otherwise it's not Relation. So that's why I prefer the notion of Relation to the notion of the universal” (Diawara and Glissant 2011, 9).

Although Glissant here *formally* renounced speaking of universalism, his concept of Relation is clearly presented as a *universal notion*, albeit not in the generalising sense of the 'big differences' mentioned by Wynter. While Relation resists the identitarian reductions that have been associated with the main ideologies of the 20th century, and the binary logic on which they were based, it is universal in a cognitive and normative sense that affirms the fundamental equality of human beings and their 'equal rights to moral respect' (Zapf 2016, 19).⁵⁰² This view is also expressed in the ethical dimension of Glissant's claim that one 'should not forget a single difference', an imperative that could be translated as a universalism of small differences. Despite the personal and political tensions between the two, a similar assertion can be found in Aimé Césaire's letter of resignation from the French communist party written in 1952. Basing his rejection of communist universalism not on the discrepancy between discourse and action, as in Fanon's chastising of the hypocritical endorsement of human rights by Western nation-states,⁵⁰³ but on more relational and philosophical grounds, Césaire wrote:

“if communism destroys our most invigorating friendships — the friendship uniting us with the rest of the Caribbean, the friendship uniting us with Africa—then I say communism has done us a disservice in making us exchange living fraternity for what risks appearing to be the coldest of cold abstractions. I shall anticipate an objection. Provincialism? Not at all. I am not burying myself in a narrow particularism. But neither do I want to lose myself in an emaciated universalism. There are two ways to lose oneself: walled segregation in the particular or dilution in the 'universal'. My conception of the universal is that of a universal enriched by all that is particular, a universal enriched by every particular: the deepening and coexistence of all particulars” (2010, 151-52).

502 From the assumption of this essential equality, universalists aim to work out normative claims that are globally applicable, the most well-known case being the paradigm of human rights (Zapf 2016, 91).

503 Moreover, as Fanon has pointed out, Western discourses of universal human rights can be deemed a hypocritical when he called in the conclusion to *The Wretched of this Earth* to “Leave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their own streets, in all the corners of the globe. For centuries they have stifled almost the whole of humanity in the name of a so-called spiritual experience” (1963, 311).

These formulations demonstrate that, in philosophical terms, Glissant and Césaire exercised a critique of a particular kind of universalism, a universalism that generalises by disavowing differences for the sake of establishing larger differences, such as solidarities based on fixed identities of nation, gender, race or class. What they, however, do not reject is the basic universalist thesis associated with the values of *égalité*, *fraternité* and *liberté* as upheld by the French and Haitian Revolution. In so doing, they reject a particular tradition of Western universalism by claiming the relevance of another universalism, one that is 'enriched by the particular' (Césaire) or consists of a 'totality of differences' (Glissant). With Glissant's general stance towards the universalist proposition being framed in this manner, his insistence on the respect for differences also points towards a cultural relativist trait that warrants to be looked at more closely.

The basic premise of relativism holds that the actions and values of human beings need to be seen in their respective social and cultural contexts (Zapf 2016, 94). Because of the view that there are no objective or universal standards according to which the developments of any particular culture can be measured, the rejection of ethnocentric chauvinism is among the essential claims put forward by relativists (94-95). Framed in terms of what Holger Zapf calls a 'weak normative theory' this aspect of relativist thought, mainly points out what is *not possible*, namely the creation of normative claims that are universally valid. This does, however, not mean that all norms are equally valid, and that it is thus impossible to formulate criticisms about them (95). Only if this relativist position were taken as a 'strong normative theory' would it risk losing the capacity to articulate any normative claims outside the limits of one's own culture, since the only norm this kind of strong relativism would uphold is the norm of an 'absolute tolerance towards cultural differences' (99). As in the case of universalist arguments – which have infamously served as legitimisations for colonial wars of expansion or for the devaluation of ways of being or cultures that do not adhere to a proposed universal, norm – concrete political expressions and institutionalisation of relativism warrant to be taken seriously as much as abstract philosophical invocations. Postcolonial scholars have, in this regard, pointed out instances where modes of domination, discrimination and exploitation were legitimised on 'cultural' grounds, for example as a way of rejecting outside interferences in response to large-scale human rights violations, or to reinforce structural gender inequalities or traditions of social bondage. In complementary fashion to the strength of universalist positions to critique a variety of cases against a fixed singular standard, the main criticism levelled against relativist positions, in the light of such cases, is that it renders formulating cross-cultural critique difficult, or almost impossible (98).

While several aspects of Glissant's philosophy, and specifically his above stated claim that “it is impossible to reduce anyone, no matter who, to a truth he would not have generated on his

own. That is, within the opacity of his time and place” (PR 194), could be interpreted as a kind of strong relativism, I would argue that Glissant's philosophy rather fits the description of Zapf's 'weak relativist normative theory'. As in Glissant's insistence that “Nothing prohibits our seeing them [Plato, Hegel, the griot] in confluence, without confusing them in some magma or reducing them to each other” (PR 194), this position does not proclaim an absolute tolerance or law of non-intervention between cultures – which would be an impossibility in a context of creolisation.⁵⁰⁴ Instead, I read Glissant's affirmation of cultural relativism to, quite generally, call for an understanding for the fact that different cultures, or what Glissant also referred to as civilisations, have found different solutions to different problems, and that these solutions need to be understood according to their respective norms (Zapf 2016, 100). This view is not to be confused with a traditional communitarianism that assigns a particular and fixed culture to a particular community but more general in that it insists on the equal validity of different epistemologies.

Having outlined Glissant's proximity to universalist and relativist thought in this manner, I perceive Glissant's stance to suggest a possible reconciliation between the two positions instead of proffering up the conceptual opposition between them further. Re-reading Glissant's statements about the 'hard line inherent in any politics and the questioning essential to any relation', in combination with his assertion that 'the enemies of the living are not afraid of totality but diversity', makes the peculiar mixture of universalist and relativist thought, that in my view marks Glissant's politics of relation, apparent. As outlined above, Glissant had no categorical problem with thinking about totality or the universal as such. Problematic from the normative vantage point of his philosophy of relation are instances when Relation and the cross-cultural mixing it involves are disavowed, prohibited or fought against. Suggesting to perceive Glissant's politics as adhering to a 'relativist-universalism' means that Glissant's philosophy proposed a *universal criteria* along which individual cultures can be measured: Their adherence to a belief in homogeneity or diversity, in the One or the Many, into rhizomatic or single roots, into atavistic or composite cultures – a division Glissant conceptualised in terms of the opposition between the 'enemies' and the 'forces of the living'. In other words, by positing its dissociative character, or the 'hard line' of his politics of relation, in this manner Glissant's philosophy expresses a belief in cultural *relativism* by making the respect for relativism, the respect for the opacity of the other, the very basis of a universal normative claim.

Perceiving Glissant's position in the light of a recent philosophical debate between Norman Ajari and Etienne Balibar (2017) about the political implications of universalist and particularism can serve to further substantiate this claim. In a filmed debate under the title *Faut-il en finir avec*

⁵⁰⁴In contrast to several proponents of a 'strong cultural relativism', Glissant's perceives cultures to be fluid, diverse constructs.

l'universalisme? Balibar defends his belief that the debate between the universal and the particular is not as interesting as the debate between different conceptions of the universal. Whereas Ajari insists on the political value of the particular, citing among others the cases of Césaire, Fanon and the Black Lives Matter movement, as traditions that insist on the socio-historical and political particularity of being black, Balibar insists that these movements can also be framed as upholding a kind of universalism, but a universalism in which differences and particularities are being appreciated and not disavowed. Framing this distinction as one differentiating 'a universality of the One' from a 'diverse universalism', with which he associates the notions of *créolité* and *mixité*, Balibar's 'diverse universalism' shares many characteristics with Glissant's Relation. This means that, what counts for Glissant at a *fundamental* level – that is outside the realm of concrete political strategies such as the ones fought against antiblack violence – is the kind of imaginary expressed by a particular political thinker or movement. Without discrediting the struggle of the Black Lives Matter movement on such formal universalist grounds as its racist detractors (“All Lives Matter”), Glissant's relativist universalism is in overt solidarity with this struggle, while at the same time questioning whether, on a fundamental level, the kind of imaginary espoused by the movement respects or disavows small differences in the sense of a relational consciousness. In that regard Glissant's relativist universalism differs from both Ajari's defence of strategic particularity and Balibar's new universalism in that it makes the respect for the smallest possible differences the abstract normative standard for a non-generalising universalism of the 'forces of the living'.

Framing Glissant's politics of relation as a specific kind of relativist-universalism counterbalances the strong themes of versatility, non-binarity and non-divisiveness that marked the preceding sections, by identifying the hidden opposition, the 'hard line', underlying Glissant's politics. Acknowledging the specificity of this *dissociative* trait of his generally *associative* politics is, in my view, a necessary step towards gaining better understanding for the potentially new common-grounds Glissant's politics could carve out in the context of contemporary decolonial struggles. The following sub-section will explore this particular aspect further.

6.3.2. Distant Relatives – Glissant's Relativist-Universalism and Divisive Modes of Decolonial Struggle

In the previous sub-section, I argued that Glissant's politics of relation possesses a distinct dissociative character which is based on the respect for diversity as a universal norm for progressive politics. Addressing a main underlying interest of this work, this sub-section takes up the question of the potential role this political stance can play in the context of specific decolonial political struggles. My argument in this regard holds that, in contrast to a rejection or celebration of Glissant's politics of relation on general or abstract grounds, its potential contribution needs to be

evaluated in specific contexts and times.

Posing the problem this sub-section sets out to explore more concretely: Firstly, if the 'hard political line' Glissant drew between adherents of sameness and diversity, single and rhizomatic roots and of homogeneity and mixing, were taken in absolute terms, it would categorically lump together adherents of such different currents as monotheistic religions, Indigenous struggles asserting the importance of maintaining a connection with ancestral lands, and right wing nationalists who believe in communities tied by 'blood and soil'. While this argument can indeed be made on an abstract level, laying bare once more the 'imprecision' of Glissant's concepts, my response to this view is that it is important to bear in mind the overall decolonial thrust of Glissant's political practice, and that the political division I identified in the previous sub-section should not be perceived in such generalising terms. While my elaboration of the relativist universalist strand of Glissant's politics of relation serves as a productive way to understand why Glissant did or did not engage with specific political struggles in his own writings or practices, it is important to relativise the categorisation of political 'friends and foes' identified above by re-emphasising the ethical dimension and generally non-totalitarian nature of Glissant's philosophy. This links to a second issue pertaining, once more, to the elusive and non-oppositional characteristics of Glissant's politics, which I have outlined in 6.2. as running counter the immediate strategic goals of struggles whose aim it is to organise resistance to neocolonial projects based on the grounds of political identities formulated in response to collective experiences of specific injustices. This might imply that Glissant's politics of relation is incompatible with such political projects or even opposed to them.⁵⁰⁵

As a way of countering such interpretations, I would argue that the distance Glissant created between his own philosophy of rhizomatic identity and these kinds of 'identity politics' or forms of 'strategic essentialisms' (Spivak 2014), or minoritarian counter-discourses (Parry 2004) should not be exaggerated to the point where Glissant's politics would appear as rejecting the struggles of those who, for example, defend their rights to exist on the basis of what Glissant called 'big differences', be it the struggle against structural discrimination based on race, gender, class or Indigeneity. In the following, I am going to substantiate this view, and point out ways in which the politics of relation can be considered as being generally supportive of, or in alliance with, these struggles, by making the case that the potentials of Glissant's politics of relation need to be regarded (a) in relation to specific local contexts, (b) by taking into account different temporalities of political struggles, and (c) its ability to create a new common-ground for intersectional struggles that tend to be conceived as separate.

⁵⁰⁵See for instance François Noudelmann's account of the tension between Glissant and a group of African American intellectuals who took issue with Glissant not being concerned with the promotion of black authors in his courses and with his distance from critical race studies (2018, 310).

Context Matters – One Size Does Not Fit All

Instead of evaluating the impact of Glissant's politics of relation in an abstract vacuum, I contend that its concrete implications have to be seen both in the light of the context from which they have been formulated and with an awareness of the context where they might be applied. In that regard it is important to remember that, I have explained my choice for reading Glissant's politics as an intellectual marronage in the introduction to this thesis (1.4.3.) in part by referencing his view that the nature of every kind of resistance is shaped by the particular kind of domination to which it responds. In this case, the resistance fostered by Glissant's intellectual marronage can be seen as a response to the kind domination exerted by France in the Antilles, a domination whose brutality Patrick Chamoiseau describes in his essay *Écrire en pays dominé* as operating mainly on the symbolic plane. Its violence is mainly exercised in the name of the assimilationist paradigm of departmentalisation, set out to silence local cultures and languages. A particularity of this project of domination according to Chamoiseau, is that it sets identitarian 'traps' for its subjects to fall back into the social antagonisms created by colonialism, a logic that the writer who resists this kind of domination has to avoid (2002, 317). Glissant's reservation against convenient oppositions of 'us' and 'them' can be seen in this light. This does, however, not mean that Glissant categorically rejected the value of such identitarian constructions for particular political goals. As he insisted on several occasions, the specific strategy endorsed by a political movement depends on its specific social context, and on the people who are best placed to 'unravel the thread' that uncovers the mode of dominance operating in their specific location. As Glissant stated in the quote from which I cited the first part above (6.2.1.):

“je n'interviens jamais dans la manière dont les gens débrouillent le fil de leur lieu. On ne peut pas débrouiller le fil d'un lieu à la place de ceux qui y vivent. Mais si j'étais Québécois, et nationaliste québécois farouche, je serais farouche nationaliste amérindien, je serais farouche nationaliste pour les Amérindiens. [...] Parce que de même qu'on ne peut sauver une langue toute seule en laissant périr les autres, de même on ne peut pas sauver une nation ou une ethnie en laissant dépérir les autres. Et c'est ce que j'appelle la Relation”⁵⁰⁶ (IPD 99).

Instead of reading this statement as a categorical call for non-intervention in the affairs of others in the sense of a 'strong cultural relativist normative theory' (Zapf) discussed above, I perceive it as underlining the specificity of the mode of politics Glissant developed throughout his life, that is one that was inspired by a specific problem-space. In the process of detangling the logic of domination operating in the Antilles, Glissant did not turn into a radical nationalist, but instead

⁵⁰⁶“I never intervene in the same way than the people who can unravel the threads of their own place. One cannot unravel the thread of a place for those who live in it. But if I was Québécois, and a fierce Quebec nationalist, I would be a fierce Indigenous nationalist, I would be a fierce nationalist for the Indigenous. [...] Because just as one cannot save on language by letting another perish, one also cannot save one nation by letting another perish. And that is what I call Relation“, my translation.

set out to explore the alternative modes of community-building outlined throughout chapter 4. Instead of discrediting the strategies employed by other people in other contexts, Glissant's hypothetical "If I was a fierce Quebec nationalist" not only implies that his politics of relation is in solidarity with all decolonial struggles, along the lines of a classic Third World internationalism, but moreover suggests that the mode of politics he endorsed would strongly differ if the mode of domination he was confronted with had been a different one, such as that of an ethnic minority struggling to assert its cultural particularity in the context of the Canadian state. Without engaging with the concrete case of Quebec nationalism and the philosophical debate between liberalism and communitarianism that emerged around it (Taylor 1992) – which Glissant did allude to in the context of these arguments –, I suggest to read his claim that 'one cannot save one nation by letting another perish' in more abstract terms as a *translation of a relational imaginary to nationalist struggles*, a translation geared towards preventing them from taking on the form of an exclusivist sense of nationality or ethnocentric chauvinism. This interpretation is in line with Glissant's worldly imagination (chapter 3), which posits that political actions in specific locations should be tied in with an awareness of the global political landscape in which these movements are fostered. The awareness of the importance of socio-historic contexts can also be linked back to Glissant's employment of specific aspects of relativist and universalist philosophic traditions. Instead of categorically grouping either of these approaches as emancipatory and anti-emancipatory per se, it is important to acknowledge that, in historic terms, both intellectual currents have been taken up by social movements for progressive or conservative ends. It is therefore important to place the arguments put forward by proponents of either side in their respective social contexts (Zapf 2016, 107). In Glissant's case, this led to a counter-proposition to a dominant brand of French universalism, which he perceived as ethnocentric and reductionist and as forming part of the Western project more generally,⁵⁰⁷ a vision he juxtaposed to the vision of the Tout-Monde. Although Glissant's philosophy therefore appears to be at a distance from nationalist struggles based on cultural particularities, the basic thrust of his politics is neither opposed to, nor incompatible with them. This claim can also be supported by taking the temporal dimensions of political movements into account, as outlined in the following part.

A Politics for Another Time?

To support my claim about the compatibility of Glissant with decolonial struggles working off a singular identitarian or communitarian bases, or openly divisive discourses that appear to be at odds with his philosophy of relation, one can also refer back to the idea that different political strategies can be productive at different stages or moments of one and the same struggle. In the

⁵⁰⁷As Glissant underlined in a footnote of *Le discours antillais*: "The West is not in the West. It is a project, not a place" (CD 3).

introduction I have referred to this idea with regards to Glissant's perceived difference from Césaire's Négritude and Fanon's Pan-Africanist project (1.1.). Acknowledging that Négritude as a 'general theory' is necessary 'wherever black people are suffering' but one that would be overcome as soon as the fight for liberation has begun, and when the oppressed people take up arms (Diawara and Glissant 2011, 7), Glissant effectively cast the imaginary of Relation as part of a strategic three-step by claiming in other words that: There is a time and place for Négritude. There is a time and place for a radical nationalism inspired by a sense of self-pride instilled by Négritude. And there is a time for a politics of relation that tries to carve out an alternative political imaginary, thereby preventing decolonial struggles from inadvertently reproducing the very colonial concepts and structures it set out to oppose. In a conversation about Jazz music, Glissant has formulated the necessity of overcoming the master's conceptual framework, while explaining his distance from Négritude politics, by saying:

*“Je pensais que le jazz était plus que de la négritude: c’était de la négritude assumée et dépassée [...] quand vous avez la volonté de dépasser, vous êtes plus grand que ce que l’on vous fait. Et c’est pour ça qu’Obama est plus grand que le pasteur Wright! Alors que ce dernier a raison lorsqu’il énonce des vérités historiques à propos du lynchage... Simplement, il ne les dépasse pas. C’est cela le jazz, cette faculté à saisir le monde sans perdre son originalité”*⁵⁰⁸ (Denis and Glissant 2009, 47).

Instead of categorically placing one political approach as superior over another, I take this to mean that, by moving away from 'big differences', communitarianism and binary thinking, Glissant's intellectual marronage opts to resist against coloniality on *another front*, namely the imaginary realm. The distance between Glissant's work on world-communities and conventional understandings of communitarianism has become particularly apparent in the course of the discussion of his proximity to postmodern and contemporary Africa-Caribbean community conceptions in 4.1.2. Instead of a communitarian certainty about who belongs and who does not, Glissant's notion of rhizomatic identity leaves this question open, emphasising the possibility of multiple forms of belonging and solidarities while not resolving the tension between the individual and the collective towards either side. While his politics takes a clear stance against various concrete forms of domination and oppression against threatened communities based on traditional bonds of belonging, and acknowledges the vital necessity of the concrete mobilisations against them, it sets out to prepare the ground for something else.

Although there is a risk of casting this preparatory or future-oriented work in a chronological or evolutionary fashion, which would express a condescending posture towards

⁵⁰⁸“For me Jazz was more than Négritude: It was an acceptance and overcoming of Négritude [...] if you have the will to overcome you are greater than what they have done to you. And that is why Obama is greater than pastor Wright! Although he is right when he speaks about the historic facts about lynchings... It is just that he does not move past them. And that is what Jazz does, this faculty to seize the world without losing ones originality”, my translation.

movements more firmly grounded in the present, there is no reason why they cannot be cultivated simultaneously, in concert, each one of them playing a specific role as part of a larger political struggle. This being said, its choice of political frontline might nevertheless renders Glissant's brand of relativist universalism irrelevant or even counter-productive to those who are involved in progressive movements against concrete forms of discrimination and social injustice. In settler colonial settings like South Africa for example, the young generation of black students behind the *Rhodes Must Fall* and *Fees Must Fall* movement has deemed it more useful to foster political solidarities based on a shared sense of African cultural particularity and experiences of racial discrimination rather than on a vague universalism or Pan-Africanist ideology, as a way to organise resistance against colonial structures in the higher education system. Their cause is intimately tied to the call for an economic liberation and socio-economic measures of redress and the redistribution of the land, from the hands of a white minority to a black majority, a cause that has most prominently been articulated by the *Economic Freedom Fighter* party. The political programs of these struggles indirectly or directly draw on the philosophies of a Négritude, Fanon's militant Pan-Africanism or Steve Biko's Black Consciousness (2004), as well as on intersectional approaches, to affirm the value of African cultures and the need to exert forms of decolonial violence on largely symbolic grounds. Making the case for the relevance of Glissant's relativist universal vision of the Tout-Monde in this and similar contexts risks being a futile endeavour. The hostile reception Achille Mbembe received for his talk at an event organised by *Rhodes Must Fall* on April 29, 2015 might serve as a case in point. The talk, titled *Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive* ended on a pronounced universalist, and I would say Glissantian note when Mbembe said:

“To tease out alternative possibilities for thinking life and human futures in this age of neoliberal individualism, we need to connect in entirely new ways the project of non-racialism to that of human mutuality. In the last instance, a non-racial university is truly about radical sharing and universal inclusion. It is about humankind ruling in common for a common which includes the non-humans, which is the proper name for democracy. To reopen the future of our planet to all who inhabit it, we will have to learn how to share it again amongst the humans, but also between the humans and the non-humans“ (2015).

Not categorically rejecting it as anachronistic or conservative, and taking Glissant's proposition seriously that there might be a time, a moment, where a relational imagination could complement or eventually emerge from a divisive political discourse, might be a way of learning from some of the mistakes made in the past. As Mahmood Mamdani has argued, 'every movement of resistance was shaped by the very structure of power against which it rebelled' (1996, 24). In the case of South Africa this led to a relatively neat adoption of the nationalist framework inherited from the Apartheid regime and, *internally*, to the persistence of the racial nomenclature it produced,

externally, to the perpetuation of South Africa's exceptional position vis-à-vis the rest of the African continent. In contrast to the 'rainbow nation' paradigm proposed by the governments of Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, which reaffirmed the permanence of ethnicised differences of a multicultural living-side-by-side, Glissant's notions of creolisation and of the Tout-Monde is more demanding (or utopian) by calling for a change in the imagination towards the acceptance of 'changing by exchanging', and the creation of more relational internal and external structures of engagement. Bearing in mind the possibility of cultivating different modes of resistance simultaneously, this does not mean that a Glissantian politics of relation could only be developed once the movement of national liberation, or decolonisation, has been achieved, but that, while these struggles are ongoing, it is worthwhile developing spaces in which a relational imaginary is cultivated.

Creating New Common-Grounds

While I have so far emphasised the combative dimension of Glissant's politics in response to a hypothetical criticism of its generally non-violent and non-exclusivist thrust, its main potentials in the realm of academic and activist decolonial work, in my view, lie in its ability to foster alternative common-grounds (in analogy to Glissant's notion of 'common-places', *lieux-communs*) between different progressive movements, a common-ground that tends to get overshadowed by ideological differences, solidarities fostered in response to different experiences of oppression, and different preferences in terms of political strategies. Instead of over-emphasising these differences, positing the Tout-Monde as the point of reference for the politics of relation poses the question whether, at the base of specific movements, a relational imaginary, a sensibility for small differences, for everything that is alive is at play, or whether they are, in the final instance, set on defending the essentialised and generalised particularities they employ for their respective struggles.

Jean Bessière (2009) has theorised the vocation of Francophone writers of Glissant's generation to create this kind of '*point de vue rassembleur*' (unifying perspective) via the impasse they confronted facing the neocolonial dominance France exerted over places like Martinique. Pointing to Glissant's investment in creating "an unrealised community, a community of humans as well as a community among humans and nature. This figuration requires a meta-textual practice, in other words the power of literature"⁵⁰⁹ (46), Bessière suggests, that this political practice neither relies on the Western universal master narratives (such as History with a capital H), nor on a shared identity of the oppressed. Instead Bessière defines this perspective in a more hybrid way as merging the views of those who were 'defeated by History' with a cultural perspective invested in exploring 'alternative paradigms to read the time of the political' (49), thereby echoing a central proposition

⁵⁰⁹"*une communauté irréalisée, une communauté, à la fois celle des hommes entre eux et celle des hommes et de la nature. Cette figuration suppose l'exercice métatextuel, autrement dit, le pouvoir de la littérature*", my translation.

made by this thesis. In the case of Glissant's politics of relation, the emphasis placed on the importance of a shared commitment to a relativist-universal worldview could, for example, provide a common-ground around which struggles focussing on singular experiences of discrimination, or on more complex intersectional modes of domination could rally. The acknowledgement of such a philosophical common-ground would work against an exclusivist identity-politics but it would also place political differences among movements that appear to be committed to the same political goals in a new light. This commonality would not imply that the respective movements lose their specificity, but that they are aware of a relational consciousness which they share with others, a consciousness that is expressed or foregrounded differently in response to particular social contexts. In a basic sense, Glissant's relativist universalism thus suggests that there is (still) another realm in which solidarities can be fostered, a realm outside, beyond or underneath the ties of shared experiences of oppression inflicted in the name of race, class or gender differences.

While emphasising the inclusivity of Glissant's politics of relation based on my own conceptualisation in this thesis, it is also important to acknowledge that Glissant's own prioritisation of decolonial and anti-racist struggles is what makes his project seem less compatible with the claims of other movements responding to discriminations based on class and gender, or more cross-cutting intersectional concerns. These limitations notwithstanding, I would claim that the fundamental epistemological and ontological basis of Glissant's anti-racism, such as it is contained in his conceptualisation of the concept of opacity (1.4.1.), can be employed just as effectively in the context of intersectional studies foregrounding the interplay of other modes of discrimination. Glissant's own silence on certain issues, and his preference for general poetic formula over the prose of nuanced intersectional analysis, can in this regard be complemented by scholars familiar with his philosophy, a philosophy which is, to paraphrase Glissant one last time, marked by the ambition to develop a sensitivity for all the differences of the world – without leaving out a single one of them.

6.4. Relating the Disciplines – Towards a Conversation Between Postcolonial Literary and Political Studies

The interdisciplinary nature of this research, broadly situated between the fields of political and literary studies, brought along its own set of challenges. Despite a profound reciprocal interest in their respective objects of study, communicating across the disciplinary boundaries between these two academic fields required a specific work of translation, in addition to the challenge of translating Glissant's poetics into academic prose (see preface). Although this might be the case with any inter- or even transdisciplinary research design, directly relating the key terms of these disciplines in a research question, by enquiring about the politics of literature – or more specifically about the politics of poetics, as I have done in this thesis – risks producing a particular sense of 'disagreement' in Jacques Rancière's sense of “a discussion of an argument [that] comes down to a dispute over the object of the discussion“ (1999, xii). In other words, due to the complex conceptual theoretical discussions about what literature and politics mean, but also because of the longer history of their relation, it is relatively easy for misunderstandings to arise about the signification of these key concepts.

This became particularly apparent to me in instances when I spoke to Glissant specialists and postcolonial literary scholars about my intention to read Glissant's work from a political angle. The main assumption or rather concern, was that I would focus on a relatively limited body of Glissant's more overtly political writings, mainly situated in the 1960s and 1970s, and would therefore have to discard the most significant aspects of his oeuvre, namely its literary character. The result of this line of reading would be a stark reduction of the complexity or even the distortion of the nature of Glissant's work. In a political theoretical context, my interest in a relatively unknown Caribbean poet with an opaque writing style, who steered clear of engaging with political theoretical debates, risked sounding like a similarly misguided endeavour.

The difficulty of explaining my intention to take seriously both, a political studies interest in concrete institutional propositions and a sensibility for the creative powers of literary works, which tend to be less visible and more difficult to categorise, was not limited to the academic realm. For several artists and writers, who I would consider to be practitioners of a politics of relation, speaking about the political dimension of their work in these terms tended to generate defensive responses. These responses could be interpreted as expressing a fear of being misunderstood, of being (mis)labelled in terms of what is conventionally understood as 'political art', or (mis)appropriated in a scientific research project. In other cases, my attempt to give a name to a specific kind of poet's politics, might have touched on something that one does, but does not attempt to bring into a permanent form in writing. Because its very essence would have already

transformed, moved on, by the time the attempt of fixating it was made. Another possible explanation that emerged in the course of this study, and to which I have alluded by referring to the different layers of visibility of Glissant's political practice (6.2.1.), might be linked to a covert division of labour among political and literary studies, where the former tends to focus on visible or concrete phenomena and the latter on less visible, or even 'spiritual' dimensions – despite the interventions of discourse analytical approaches by poststructural and postcolonial theories in both fields that trouble this distinction. In Glissant's own words, the differentiation between these two realms of perception was expressed in the context of Mycéa's call to treat 'small and big plants' with the same level of seriousness (2.2.2., 3.2.3.). In the context of this thesis, treating both of these levels with the same seriousness meant to consider the nuances of literary aesthetics and Glissant's organisational actions and public interventions without creating a hierarchy between them. To strike a balance between the two, while resisting the temptation of a too mechanic approach, turned out to be the main methodological challenge of this research – a challenge that, in part, contributed to the length of this study.

At this point I will reflect on the potential contributions the method I employed in this study and the findings derived from it can make to a set of academic debates, which I broadly structure between Glissant scholars (6.4.1.), in the field of postcolonial theory (6.4.2.), literary studies (6.4.3.) and political studies (6.4.4.).

6.4.1. Contribution to Glissant Scholarship

In my review of the secondary literature on the political dimension of Glissant's work (1.3.) I identified a tendency to either downplay or laud Glissant's politics without explicitly theorising the meaning of the political in either of the two cases. I furthermore argued that, in part due to an unproblematised adoption of established genres of literary writing and political practices, important connections that cut across Glissant's oeuvre tend to be overlooked. Responding to what I identified as a *compartmental* and *vertical* reading of his work with a *transversal* and *lateral*, or what I called relational reading of Glissant, this thesis makes two key propositions to debates among Glissant scholars:

The first concerns the proposition of framing *Glissant as a political writer* in a specific sense of the political that draws on the liberatory role assigned to cultural workers in the black radical tradition, as much as it draws on postmodern insights into the politics of literature and aesthetics. The second concerns my conceptualisation of the politics of relation, which Glissant had proposed in his own writings and which has, so far, not received the critical attention it deserves. By describing Glissant's politics of relation as a form of intellectual marronage I have, moreover, made a suggestion for the way its characteristics can be described. Despite the set of arguments brought

forward in the course of this research to support this perspective, the non-prescriptive nature of this work invites a critical interrogation of this approach from other perspectives.

In addition to these two main claims, several aspects of his oeuvre emerged as being worthy of being considered in a *political reading* of Glissant's work that have hitherto been relegated to the 'private' realm: Firstly, while the private or personal aspects of his work have so far been referred to as a way of measuring whether Glissant's actions were coherent with his pronouncements and his philosophy, the concept of life-writing (1.4.2.) has been a productive tool to render these biographic aspects of his life not only more complex but also enabled me to show how Glissant deliberately framed or performed certain parts of his personal trajectory as being of political importance. In this sense, this thesis made the case for a shift away from questions of coherence and representation to questions of self-stylisation and creation. As I repeatedly pointed out in Glissant's case, the practice of life-writing should not be seen as limited to Glissant the individual but as a practice involving a collective referring to a group of Glissant's friends and followers, who are invested in portraying specific aspects of his life in a deliberately political, at times mythical, light.

Secondly, the transversal reading of Glissant's political archive also led to certain periods of his professional work appearing in a different light. In contrast to a tendency among Glissant scholars to, for example, refer to his engagements with the *UNESCO Courier* or the *Institut martiniquais d'études* as being of secondary importance or as convenient means to make a living, I framed these engagements as forming part of a series of community-building projects that took the form of imagined communities, such as the global *Courier* readership, and concrete face-to-face communities, such as the students and teachers of the *Institut martiniquais d'études*.

Thirdly, instead of reading the inclusion of certain extra-textual activities in Glissant's fictional or essayistic texts as a neutral transition from one realm to another, I have made the case that the appearance or discussion of an event or line of thought in different media matters in the context of Glissant's politics of relation. As possible interpretations for the significance of these 'migrations' I have suggested perceiving them as strategies of re-enforcement but also as methods of preservation, geared towards creating a political archive that could contribute to the creation of political actions in another time and place. Once more, this argument was not geared towards demonstrating a great coherence, but to show how things are connected, and, more importantly, what purpose these individual connections can be seen to have.

6.4.2. Contribution to Postcolonial Theory

In part sparked by the curious absence of a consideration of Glissant's work in postcolonial political thought, I introduced this research as being invested in shifting the point of focus from the politics of theory to the theory of politics in David Scott's terms. I took this distinction to mean that

the postcolonial debate about the problematisation of Eurocentric theories has to be supplemented by taking seriously the question of *what gets to count as (legitimate) political action*. As Scott points out, this line of inquiry has to be seen against a historic background in which the anticolonial modes of struggle developed in the 1960s need to be re-interrogated (1.1.). Put more concretely, although Fanon's theory of decolonisation, as it has been formulated in the Algerian war of liberation, is rightly considered as a highly productive tool to make sense of contemporary forms of coloniality, the radical changes in the geopolitical landscape in the course of the last sixty years have to be accounted for. My exploration of Glissant's politics of relation makes two contributions to this challenge, the first one pointing out the relevance of more *creative, utopian or explorative* postcolonial political research, the second placing an emphasis on the potential of the *relational* thrust of Glissant's intellectual marronage in postcolonial scholarship.

Although I mainly focussed on exploring alternative modes of political practices that I perceive Glissant's work to point towards, this did not pre-empt the consideration of established elements of postcolonial criticisms in this study. Glissant's engagement with history, migration, culture and identity has, in this sense, revisited several of the main concerns of postcolonial criticism and reaffirmed their relevance in the context of this research. In an attempt to move beyond this set of *critical* preoccupations I have carved out a more creative or exploratory trajectory in my reading of Glissant by, for example, suggesting the archipelagic model or the 'small country' as a productive postcolonial conceptual framework that offers an alternative to the dominant models of the nation-state and the internal and external relations that are its defining traits (4.4.2.). This path lead out of a properly oppositional logic, and of a view of Glissant as a singular intellectual figure, towards a more pronounced acknowledgement of overlaps between his and other attempts to rethink political forms outside the postcolonial tradition, for example around the proposition of the city-state as a translation of Glissant's concept of the small country – a concept which was also interrogated as proposing an alternative to the integration paradigm upheld in the realm of contemporary immigration policies. Venturing out into this uncharted terrain with Glissant was not without risks, since an in-depth exploration of these models would require more space. Without being fully explored and supported, these forays risk being criticised for their superficiality. In the spirit of the mapping method introduced in the preface, the intention behind these explorations was, however, not to cast them as fully fledged studies in their own right, but as suggestions for avenues to be further pursued. The main concern in these instances was to demonstrate that Glissant's concepts can be productively applied in political studies employing a postcolonial lens. In short, this work demonstrated that Glissant's concepts can provide the potential for critical studies, in which empirical phenomena are measured against the normative standards of Glissant's philosophy, as

well as the exploration of more creative or utopian directions that are interested in exploring the institutional implications of considerations Glissant explored in his fictional or abstract theoretical work. In both cases, the emphasis placed on the notions of relationality and entanglement appeared as complementary to postcolonial studies pursuing more oppositional and dissociative lines of research.

This work also led to several paths where postcolonial concerns overlap with those of other scholarly traditions, as mentioned above. This underlined that some of the notions Glissant used in a mainly self-referential manner, could be more directly connected to existing scholarship developed by political theorists, among others. When I interrogated the theoretical potentials of Glissant's belief in the future of small countries, his work, for example somewhat unexpectedly encountered the theory of Benjamin Barber, whose arguments about 'strong democracy' have so far been discussed in the context of Western tradition of liberal and radical democratic theory (5.3.2.). The point here was not to argue that Glissant has proposed more of the *same*, and could thus be portrayed as a Caribbean figure proving the universal applicability of Barber's work, but to make the case that Glissant's work is not 'radically *other*' either, as implied by several postcolonial studies who place a strong emphasis on the anti-, or post-Western thrust of his work (Drabinski and Parham 2015, Elizabeth de Loughrey and George B. Handely 2011) (1.3.3.). This reasoning forms part of a general balance this thesis tried to maintain: In cases where Glissant's work is cast as representing a radical Caribbean other to Western philosophy, I emphasised that his work provides ample points of connection with existing political theoretical reflections. In cases where Glissant's work is framed as firmly belonging to a Western philosophic tradition, or a more specific Francophone poetic tradition, my work unsettled this firm categorisation, for instance by provocatively placing Glissant in the context of African philosophical debates or political conceptions of blackness.

By unsettling the positioning of Glissant into any one of these intellectual traditions, my work thus highlighted the common-ground between different academic traditions that could further explore their mutual areas of interest. This has, for instance, become apparent in my engagement with scholarship around the notion of non-sovereignty, a notion that is at the intersection of postcolonial studies, Caribbean studies and Indigenous studies (4.1.2.). In the same vein, Glissant's work has also shown that the kind of relativist-universalism or black cosmopolitanism (Nwankwo, see 3.2.2.), which I perceive it to endorse, does not clash but effectively overlaps with other minor modes of cosmopolitanisms. For the field of postcolonialism, which has been marked by a debate of its geographic and temporal scale, and the question of its global applicability, Glissant's world-communities, in this regard provided a conceptual opening towards the fostering of alliances based on a shared relational imaginary, such as other so-called 'non-universal universal' traditions as

Antillanité, Pan-Africanism, Third Worldism, Indigeneity or more pronouncedly intersectional currents.

6.4.3. Contribution to Literary Studies

In my overview of scholarship on Glissant in the realm of literary studies, I remarked that despite a general awareness of the political concerns of his work, and an interest in literary treatments of political themes, there is a reluctance to draw stronger connections between the practice of writing, performance and organisational action, as potentially signifying a poetics of a different kind. The main findings of this thesis respond to this bias in the following ways:

A first argument in this regard concerned the fact that Glissant's textual and non-textual work has to be seen as closely intertwined and as being marked by permeable borders. This meant that Glissant's politics is marked by a commitment to the idea that writing should have an impact in the extra-textual world. In line with the awareness of the different 'layers' or 'degrees of visibility' that I claimed to be characteristic for his mode of politics (6.2.), a literary analysis that takes this dynamic seriously has to engage with the full range of literary expression, from its most visible elements to the mostly hidden signs or ciphers. An example in this respect was made in 4.2.3., where I argued that the stylistic techniques employed in Glissant's novels, such as his use of collective narrative voice do not only perform the inclusivity of a particular inclusive conception of community textually, but that these stylistic techniques form part of a larger effort on Glissant's part to bring into existence an actual extra-textual community, to whose emergence a series of organisational structures and interventions were dedicated.

A second aspect worth pointing out is that the politics of Glissant's literary political practice forms part of a larger tradition that is marked by a wholistic and politically committed perception of literary activity (1.2.3.). While this study was mainly concerned with the complex dynamic between the different layers of Glissant's literary and organisational work, this mode of reading could thus also be explored in the study of other authors. The notion of the 'poet's politics' could in this sense be attributed to other individuals or collectives who conceive their work in a wholistic terms, where the smallest and the largest elements do not have to be divorced from one another. Even if this is more easily discernable in the life and work of intellectuals, writers and artists who are in the public domain, this does not imply that the politics of relation could not also be described in less visible realms as well. Of course, these case-studies would not be modelled along the direction of an intellectual marronage but would point out separate directions, perhaps uncovering alternative political traditions. This line of research, which could draw from the method of taking into account aspects of life-writing, fictional production, abstract thought and organisational action would not only serve to untie the term from Glissant's person. Proceeding from a broader conceptual

understanding of the political, such a literary analysis would moreover contribute to a more complex understanding of what is conventionally understood as politically committed writing, thus supplementing the established perceptions that are tied to rather narrow conceptions of the political, as outlined in 1.2.1. While the wholistic ambition of this mode of research proved adequate for a study of Glissant's work, it is also important to remark that it does not claim to be suitable for the study of any writer. Due to the tremendous diversity of writers' self-perceptions and positioning, many of whom do not feel the necessity of connecting their work to the political realm, or to conceive their life-work to form a 'complete whole', there are ample reasons, to not investigate their literary work in the same manner.

Thirdly, this study argued that certain literary debates gain an added level of significance when they are seen from a political perspective, and marked by a sensibility for the permeability of textual and non-textual realms. Section 4.3.4., for example, shifted the discussion about world literature from a debate about the selection of texts and authors, thus from a disciplinary debate about inclusivity, power structures and pedagogic effects, towards the properly political terrain of community-creation where these authors are cast as forming a new community of the living and the dead. This community, as I moreover argued with regards to Glissant's world literature project of *Anthologie du Tout-Monde* (2010), is both imaginary as much as it can take on more concrete forms, such as the organisational work of the *International Parliament of Writers* (4.4.2.). In these cases, the global community of poets effectively functions as a shared spiritual ancestry with which contemporary individuals can identify, and which can thereby, indirectly, inspire future political action.

6.4.4. Contribution to Political Studies

As much as this study worked towards opening up new areas for interrogation for literary studies interested in Glissant and postcolonial political questions, so did it attempt to point towards additional avenues for political studies interested in literary questions. In closing, I will present these along the lines of the Glissantian notions of Relation, the imagination, and the creolisation of political theory.

Couched in Glissant's world-historic conception of creolisation, the notion of Relation offers a new normative vocabulary that can be employed in both the analysis of domestic politics and international politics. This normative charge of Relation could serve as a conceptual basis for further studies interested in an analysis of how particular nation-states or sub-national political actors adhere or do not adhere to Glissant's relational standards. These relational standards concern both the way historical, cultural and geographic connections are being acknowledged and fostered, as well as the way interconnections between political communities and their natural surroundings

are cultivated. Questions that would be of importance in such an endeavour would, for example, ask: Which communities are most willing to accept strangers? Whose sense of nationality is most readily associated with a global sense of responsibility towards other nations? Which communities embrace the process of creolisation more willingly than others? Since political 'progress' or 'strength' would be measured in radically different terms, according to Glissant's imaginary of relation, an alternative 'political map' of the world could be drawn.

Another aspect of Glissant's work tied to the normative dimension of Relation is a critical interrogation of the set of relational categories and generalisations Glissant proposed throughout his work. Somewhat at odds with Glissant's own aversion to generalising visions and fixed categorisations, he – arguably more so than other postcolonial writers – did not shy away from producing a list of socio-political categorisations, which allow scholars to translate the normative aspect of the concept of Relation from its fluid form into a more fixed analytical grid. Among these concepts is the metaphorical opposition of archipelagoes and continents, of atavistic cultures and composite cultures, and of exclusive and inclusive founding myths. Taking up the latter distinction, this study explored a way to apply the concept of founding narratives in a discourse analytical study of border regimes in section 5.3. Outside this specific political field, the emphasis Glissant's political thought placed on the discursive basis of political communities, could also be taken up by discourse analytical studies that are interested in the emergence of hegemonic discourses or paradigms operating on a collective level and informing a community's sense of self and its relations towards the outside world. Whereas discourse analytical approaches, in the tradition of critical discourse analysis or in a Foucauldian tradition, are interested in the study of a larger set of texts and their effects in the non-discursive realm, Glissant's own interest in epics or myths operates in a more general, larger temporal and less tangible empiric framework. By assigning a fundamental political importance to so-called root problems or 'curses' haunting particular societies, he insisted that the identification of the founding myth underlying a community could contribute to solving a set of socio-political issues that are the indirectly result or 'symptom' of these root problems. The mode of research employed in this context could engage both with a set of representative texts or singular epics that define a society's sense of self, thereby laying the basis for the creation of counter-discourses, myths or epics that seek to address and counter-balance the 'irrelationalities' identified in these texts.

A second set of contributions Glissant's work stands to make in political studies, and more specifically in the field of political theory, revolves around the notion of the imagination. To briefly reiterate the main aspects of the conceptualisation, introduced in 1.4.1., Glissant's understanding of the imaginary differs from what tends to be referred to as 'consciousness' in left political traditions,

by explicitly emphasising the importance of emotional and intuitive dimensions in addition to the realms of reason or rationality (Thill 2011, 5). As a working definition of the term, I quoted Glissant and Chamoiseau's assertion that the imaginary refers to “the way one thinks of oneself, of the world, of one's place in the world, to order ones' principles and to choose a home”⁵¹⁰ (QLMT 8). Outside Glissant's own work, the imagination occupies a prominent position in the arts and in Afro-Caribbean intellectual contexts. As mentioned earlier, the Barbadian novelist and poet George Lamming, for example, refers to what he calls the 'sovereignty of the imagination', asserting that “The sovereignty of the imagination gives us that capacity for language and therefore the ability to name and establish categories. But this is not just a literary capacity; it allows us to define freedom” (2004, xi).⁵¹¹

In the realm of political theory, the imagination has so far not been a widely used concept (Trautmann 2019, 553-54). It has, however recently started to receive increasing attention for the way it allows scholars to consider the realms of aesthetics, narratives, visibility, affects, the unconscious, desire, utopia, ideologies and fantasy as having an impact on political thought (554). As Felix Trautmann writes in this respect, “In the light of the imaginary, radical democratic theories can interrogate political founding moments, symbolic processes that create new forms, and binding forces created through affect and projective social visions from a new perspective”⁵¹² (554), a case I demonstrated in chapter 4. Apart from the work of Cornelius Castoriadis, who is regarded as the most prominent political theorist to work with the imagination, and to whom the imaginary is an uncontrollable *ex nihilo* force with the power to constitute political communities (Sörensen 2019), scholars working in feminist and postcolonial traditions have also taken up the imaginary as a concept that is geared both to a description of hegemonic forms of subjectivity as well as politically emancipatory forces working against them (Trautmann 2019, 561). Glissant's understanding and employment of the imaginary can, in my view, contribute to these lines of work in three significant ways.

A first and rather general aspect concerns the possibility of taking the realms of literature and poetry seriously as political archives in their own right, particularly considering the stated ambition and ability of writers and poets to think outside established conceptual confines and to invent new forms, whose political implications warrant to be further explored with a political

⁵¹⁰For the full quote refer to section 1.4.1.

⁵¹¹In contrast to Glissant's understanding, Lamming considers social and cultural aspects to exert a determining influence on the imagination. This is apparent in formulations such as, “How you come to think of where you are, and how you come to think of your relation to where you are, is very dependent on what is the character and the nature of power, where you are. You yourself do not at a certain stage decide who you are, and what your relationship to where you are, should be” (2002, 16-17). As I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, Glissant's conception of the imagination effectively disavows this kind of social determinism and thus insists on a different kind of 'sovereignty' of the imagination.

⁵¹²“*Im Lichte des Imaginären lassen sich für die radikale Demokratietheorie politische Gründungsmomente, symbolische Formgebungsprozesse sowie affektive Bindungskräfte und projektive Vorstellungen von Gemeinschaft neu perspektivieren*“, my translation.

theoretical conceptual vocabulary.

A second aspect refers to Glissant's idiosyncratic way of engaging with the past and the future in imaginative ways. In the context of this thesis, this not only meant that Glissant worked to recover and connect historic fragments by reverting to the imagination, it also meant that his intellectual practice of marronage was not modelled on historic truths, but on a prophetic vision that pointed out the future importance of this movement. Taking seriously the role of the imagination in this context also, more generally, means that the importance of political utopia, dreams and non-practical propositions are taken seriously as an antidote against the sense that there is no alternative to the status quo. As the example of marronage demonstrates, more often than not, these propositions do not have to be formulated in terms of science fiction, but can refer back to political practices that were developed in the past and have been preserved in non-official archives.

A third aspect concerns the changing temporal framework in which the poet's politics operates according to Glissant. Referring back to the notion of planetary and Tout-Monde time (6.2.2.), the dimension of the imaginary provokes the question of which political practices become worthy of interrogation when the time-frame in which their effectivity or value is measured is significantly expanded? How can the political effects of a particular writer, artist or collective, whose performance takes place in another temporal realm, or realm of visibility be evaluated in political terms? While these queries risk sounding esoteric, this thesis has referred to concrete examples where several institutions and practices have shifted from a literary into the political realm, by adjusting the conceptual framework in which they were studied. The belief in what Glissant called 'small plants', and the awareness of the diverse ways in which ideas travel and can have an impact on the imaginary calls for another sensibility, and caution before deeming certain political projects as failures or successes.

I would like to close with a final remark about the potential meaning of a creolisation of political theory that can be inferred from this work. A key character trait of Glissant's politics of relation that appeared both within my detailed descriptions of the individual lines of flight in the respective chapters, as well as in the more general descriptions of the direction and positioning of Glissant's intellectual marronage was a reluctance to be placed in a singular intellectual tradition, or to be reduced to an oppositional project. Instead of placing his philosophical project in a singular analytic category, or assigning it to a political tradition, this thesis maintained that it might more useful to consider his politics as a properly creole construction informed by various philosophical traditions. As Neil Roberts has argued in that regard: "Glissant's political theory integrates the poeticism and historicism of Afro-Caribbean thought, scholarship on creolization, reflections on the post-plantation American south, the nuances of Francophone theorizing, and the contours of French

and German Continental philosophy“ (2015, 143).

Reflecting on the path taken in this study, one could add to this enumeration that Glissant's philosophy, despite several important differences, is marked by significant overlaps with Césaire's Négritude and Fanon's radical Pan-Africanism (1.1.), and that, conceptually speaking, Glissant's politics of relation refers to both, a conventional sense of the political as a sphere apart, as much as it draws on postmodern claims pertaining to an inherent political dimension of literature and the black radical tradition's insistence to not cut off literary production from general cultural or political concerns (1.2.). Without wanting to rehearse each of these cases individually, the same could be said about his engagement with normative and descriptive conceptions of democracy (5.4.), his treatment of real and imagined communities (4.1.), his take on world literature (4.4.), and the conceptualisation of the movement of marronage itself as it emerges from his work (2.2., 5.1.).

As I repeatedly pointed out, the general tendency to refrain from an either/or-logic was expressed by Glissant in his study of William Faulkner, where he found that the formulation of 'not only ... but', “broadens the perception of the real until it becomes a sort of whirlwind, relativizing our first idea of reality with a second that spins into vertigo” (FM 205-06). Translating this invitation to adopt a broader perspective to my study of Glissant's work meant taking seriously the different dimensions of the particular *and* the universal, the island *and* the whole-world, the discursive *and* the non-discursive, the nation-state *and* alternative modes of communities, planetary time *and* local time, fiction *and* non-fiction, historical scholarship on marronage *and* Glissant's 'prophetic vision of the past', travelling *and* staying in the same place as a way of being in relation with the world, acknowledging the decolonial strategies developed by the maroon *and* the slave, creating imaginary *and* concretely organised world-communities, identifying Glissant's critique of borders *and* the intention of imagining utopian alternatives to them, bringing together abstract thought, writing *and* practice as equal constituting parts of his politics of relation.

In contrast to a recurring theme in political theoretical positions discussed in this work, where the meaning of the political, the community or democracy was categorised in exclusive terms and with certainty, Glissant's politics of relation thus repeatedly, in part, agrees and, in part, differs, and in so doing refrains from any permanently fixed definitions. While this elusiveness might be seen as a 'neither here nor there' position that refrains from taking a firm stand, it also accords Glissant's politics an openness to a variety of intellectual traditions, while still insisting on its own specificity. In the general philosophic framework endorsed by this thesis, I suggest to frame this kind of openness as forming part of a creolisation of political theory. This view effectively complements the conceptualisations proposed by Neil Roberts, John Drabinski and Marisa Parham. For Roberts, the project of creolising political theory with Glissant is tied to an understanding of

creolisation as a process of “moving words, moving concepts, and moving theory. Marronage, for Glissant, is a creolized notion occupying this terrain“ (2015, 147). In a basic sense, this could be taken to mean that, by including notions such as marronage into mainstream political theoretical debates, the sub-discipline could itself undergo a process of creolisation in response to a traditionally Eurocentric set of conceptual references. Drabinski and Parham understand the process of creolising philosophy, more broadly, to entail a recognition that Glissant's philosophy 'breaks with the tradition of tradition' by which they mean the single roots genealogy tying Western philosophy to Greek antiquity (2-3). Acknowledging that Glissant's work emerged out of distinct space 'The Caribbean', which is in itself a complex and contested location, means for Drabinski and Parham to think about epistemology, ontology, aesthetics, ethics and politics *from the Caribbean* (6), a proposition which I take to indirectly imply an acknowledgement of the complex mix of Western, African, Indian, and Indigenous philosophic influences. Additionally taking the non-binary and non-categorical thrust of Glissant's politics of relation into account, in my view, strengthens these ideas by acknowledging the specificity of Glissant's politics on a more formal or conceptual level, aspects which this research placed a particular emphasis on. It, moreover, shows that what Drabinski and Parham point out as the 'post-Western model of thinking' in Glissant's work (2), also applies to the way I attempted to study Glissant's politics through the method of mapmaking, namely in a less exclusivist, more relational, less definitive and more tentative manner.

Bibliography

- Abbas, Nabila. 2019. 'Jacques Rancière'. In *Radikale Demokratietheorie: Ein Handbuch*. Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 2248. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Achebe, Chinua. 2013. *A Personal History of Biafra*. London: Penguin.
- Agier, Michel. 2016. *Les migrants et nous: Comprendre Babel*. <http://www.cairn.info/les-migrants-et-nous--9782271092847.htm>.
- Ahluwalia, D. P. S. 2001. *Politics and Post-Colonial Theory: African Inflections*. London ; New York: Routledge.
- Aikins, Joshua, and Bendix, Daniel. 2015. 'The "Refugees Welcome" Culture'. *Africasacountry*. 16 November 2015. <https://africasacountry.com/2015/11/resisting-welcome-and-welcoming-resistance>.
- Alon, Shir. 2016. 'The Becoming-Literature of the World: Pheng Cheah's Case for World Literature'. *LA Review of Books*. 19 December 2016. <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/becoming-literature-world-pheng-cheahs-case-world-literature/>.
- Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London ; New York: Verso.
- Anderson, Debra L. 1995. *Decolonizing the Text: Glissantian Readings in Caribbean and African-American Literatures*. *Francophone Cultures and Literatures*, v. 1. New York: P. Lang.
- Apter, Emily S. 2013. *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*. London ; New York: Verso.
- Arendse, Graeme, and März, Moses. 2016. 'Salut Glissant'. *Chimurenga Chronic*, 2016.
- Arnold, A. James, Julio Rodríguez-Luis, and J. Michael Dash, eds. 2001. *A History of Literature in the Caribbean, Vol. 2: English- and Dutch-Speaking Regions*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. <http://www.myilibrary.com?id=225483>.
- Artières, Philippe, and Glissant, Édouard. 2003. "'Solitaire et Solidaire" Entretien Avec Edouard Glissant'. *Terrain*, no. 41 (September): 9–14. <https://doi.org/10.4000/terrain.1599>.
- Balutansky, Kathleen M., and Marie-Agnès Sourieau, eds. 1998. *Caribbean Creolization: Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature, and Identity*. Gainesville : Barbados: University Press of Florida ; Press University of the West Indies.
- Barber, Benjamin R. 2013. *If Mayors Ruled the World: Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Barney, Jean-Claude. 2007. *Nèg Maron*. Mars Distribution.
- Bartels, Anke, Lars Eckstein, Nicole Waller, and Dirk Wiemann. 2019. *Postcolonial Literatures in English: An Introduction*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung & Carl Ernst Poeschel GmbH. <https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=5925852>.
- Barthes, Roland. 2006. *Mythologies*. Translated by Annette Lavers. 47. [print.]. New York, NY: Hill and Wang.
- Baudot, Alain. 1993. *Bibliographie Annotée d'Edouard Glissant*. Collection Inventaire. Série Ecrivains Francophones, no 2. Toronto, Ont., Canada: Editions du GREF.
- Bedorf, Thomas. 2010. 'Das Politische Und Die Politik – Konturen Einer Differenz'. In *Das Politische Und Die Politik*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Bedorf, Thomas, and Kurt Röttgers, eds. 2010. *Das Politische Und Die Politik*. 1., Auflage.

- Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 1957. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Benítez Rojo, Antonio. 1996. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. Post-Contemporary Interventions. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Benjamin, Walter. 2000. *Sprache und Geschichte: philosophische Essays*. Nachdr. Universal-Bibliothek 8775. Stuttgart: Reclam.
- Bernabé, Jean, Chamoiseau, Patrick, and Raphaël, Confiant. 1990. 'In Praise of Creoleness'. *Callaloo* 13 (4): 886–909.
- Bessière, Jean, ed. 2009. *Littératures Francophones et Politique*. Lettres Du Sud. Paris: Karthala.
- Biko, Steve. 2004. *I Write What I like: A Selection of His Writings*. Johannesburg: Picador Africa.
- Bogues, Anthony. 2003. *Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Radical Political Intellectuals*. Africana Thought. New York: Routledge.
- . 2004. 'Introduction'. In *The Sovereignty of the Imagination*. Kingston, Jamaica: Arawak Pub.
- Bojadžijev, Manuela, and Karakayalı, Serhat. 2010. 'Recuperating the Sideshows of Capitalism: The Autonomy of Migration Today'. E-Flux.Com. June 2010. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/17/67379/recuperating-the-sideshows-of-capitalism-the-autonomy-of-migration-today/>.
- Bongie, Chris. 1998. *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.
- Bongie, Chris. 2008. *Friends and Enemies: The Scribal Politics of Post/Colonial Literature*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Bonilla, Yarimar. 2015. *Non-Sovereign Futures: French Caribbean Politics in the Wake of Disenchantment*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Breleur, Ernest, Patrick Chamoiseau, Serge Domi, Gérard Delver, Édouard Glissant, Guillaume Pigéard de Gurbert, Olivier Portecop, Olivier Pulvar, and Jean-Claude William. 2009. 'Manifeste Pour Les "produits" de Haute Nécessité'. http://www.vers-les-iles.fr/livres/2009/manifeste_produits_haute_necessite.pdf.
- Britton, Celia. 1999. *Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance*. New World Studies. Charlottesville, Va: University Press of Virginia.
- . 2008. *The Sense of Community in French Caribbean Fiction*. Contemporary French and Francophone Cultures 10. Liverpool: Univ. Press.
- . 2014. *Language and Literary Form in French Caribbean Writing*. Liverpool University Press. <https://doi.org/10.5949/liverpool/9781781380369.001.0001>.
- Britton, Celia, and Glissant, Édouard. 2007. 'Souvenirs Des Années 40 à La Martinique : Interview Avec Edouard Glissant.' *L'Esprit Créateur* 47 (1): 96–104.
- Britton, Celia M. 2009. 'Globalization and Political Action in the Work of Edouard Glissant'. *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 13 (3): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-2009-022>.
- Buchstein, Hubertus, and Pohl, Kerstin. 2017. 'Benjamin Barber'. In *Demokratietheorien: von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart: Texte und Interpretationshilfen*, edited by Peter Massing et al., 9. Auflage, 281–87. Schwalbach/Ts: Wochenschau Verlag.
- Buck-Morss, Susan. 2009. *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*. Illuminations. Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Burton, Richard D. E. 1997. *Le Roman Marron: Études Sur La Littérature Martiniquaise*

- Contemporaine*. Paris, France: L'Harmattan.
- Butler, Judith. 2006. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London ; New York: Verso.
- Casanova, Pascale. 2004. *The World Republic of Letters*. Translated by M. B. DeBevoise. First Harvard University Press paperback edition. *Convergences Inventories of the Present*. Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: Harvard University Press.
- Celikates, Robin. 2016. 'Migration. Normative und sozialtheoretische Perspektiven'. In *Internationale Politische Theorie*, edited by Regina Kreide and Andreas Niederberger, 229–44. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-476-05470-8_15.
- Céry, Loïc. 2018. 'Édouard Glissant, Au-Delà Des Fantômes: À Propos de : François Noudelmann, Édouard Glissant. L'identité Génereuse'. ÉdouardGlissant.Fr. February 2018. <http://edouardglissant.fr/documents/crnoudelmann2018.pdf>.
- . n.d. 'Le Manifeste Pour Un Projet Global: L'avenir d'une Écopolitique Caribéenne'. ÉdouardGlissant.Fr. <http://tout-monde.com/dossiers10a.html>; <http://tout-monde.com/dossiers10b.html>.
- Césaire, Aimé. 1990. 'Poetry Is/and Knowledge'. In *Lyric and Dramatic Poetry, 1946-82*, translated by Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith. CARAF Books. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- . 1995. *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*. Paris: Présence Africaine.
- . 2010. 'Letter to Maurice Thorez'. Translated by Chike Jeffers. *Social Text* 28 (2): 145–52.
- Chamoiseau, Patrick. 2002. *Écrire en pays dominé*. Collection Folio 3677. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 2017. *Frères Migrants*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- . 2018. *Slave Old Man*. Translated by Linda Coverdale. New York ; London: The New Press.
- Chatterjee, Partha. 1999. 'Anderson's Utopia'. *Diacritics* 29 (4): 128–34.
- Cheah, Pheng. 2008. 'What Is a World? On World Literature as World-Making Activity'. *Daedalus* 137 (3): 26–38. <https://doi.org/10.1162/daed.2008.137.3.26>.
- Chelliah, Lalitha, and Peterson, Chris. 2016. 'Angela Davis: “The Refugee Movement Is the Civil Rights Movement of Our Time”'. Greenleft.Org.Au. 29 October 2016. <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/angela-davis-'-refugee-movement-civil-rights-movement-our-time'>.
- Chevalier, Tracy, ed. 1993. *Contemporary World Writers*. 2nd ed. Detroit: St. James Press.
- Christiani, Jean-Noel. 1993. 'Edouard Glissant, Entretien Avec Patrick Chamoiseau'. *Les Hommes Livres*. Le Diamant: INA.
- Clark, Beatrice Stith. 1989. 'IME Revisited: Lectures by Edouard Glissant on Sociocultural Realities in the Francophone Antilles'. *World Literature Today* 63 (4): 599. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40145550>.
- Collage, Philippe. 1987. *Édouard Glissant. Pays Rêvé, Pays Réel*. Maison de la Poésie de Paris. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jO0dfmJWAjc&feature=emb_logo.
- Comtesse, Dagmar, Flügel-Martinsen, Oliver, Martinsen, Franziska, and Nonhoff, Martin, eds. 2019. *Radikale Demokratietheorie: Ein Handbuch*. Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 2248. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Condé, Maryse. 1995. 'Language and Power: Words as Miraculous Weapons'. *CLA Journal* 39 (1): 18–25.

- Condé, Maryse. 2012. *La vie sans fards*. Paris: Le Grand livre du mois.
- Confiant, Raphaël. 2018. 'A Propos d'une Biographie d'Édouard Glissant'. *Mediapart.Fr*. 2018. <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/edition/memoires-du-colonialisme/article/070318/propos-d-une-biographie-d-edouard-glissant-par-r-confiant1ere-parti>.
- Couffon, Claude, and Édouard Glissant. 2001. *Visite à Edouard Glissant*. Paris: Edition Caractères.
- Coursil, Jacques. 1998. 'La Catégorie de La Relation Dans Les Essais d'Édouard Glissant: Philosophie d'une Poétique'. Sorbonne.
- Crowley, Patrick. 2006. 'Édouard Glissant: Resistance and Opacité'. *Romance Studies* 24 (2): 105–15. <https://doi.org/10.1179/174581506x120073>.
- Cusset, François. 2017. 'Die Bescheidene Revolution'. Translated by Jainski, Sabine. *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 13 July 2017. <https://monde-diplomatique.de/artikel/!5426138>.
- Dallmayr, Fred. 2004. 'Beyond Monologue: For a Comparative Political Theory'. *Perspectives on Politics* 2 (2): 249–57.
- Damrosch, David. 2003. *What Is World Literature?* Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- Dash, Michael J. 1995. *Édouard Glissant*. Cambridge Studies in African and Caribbean Literature. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Davis, Angela Y. 2017. 'Abolition and Refusal'. In *The Great Refusal: Herbert Marcuse and Contemporary Social Movements*, edited by Lamas et al., vii–xiii. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Debien, Gabriel. 1996. 'Marronage in the French Caribbean'. In *Maroon Societies*, edited by Price, Richard, 107–34. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Guattari, Félix. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Massumi, Brian. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.
- DeLoughrey, Elizabeth M., and George B. Handley, eds. 2011. *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Denis, Jacques, and Édouard Glissant. 2009. 'Le Jazz Est Une Négritude Dépassée'. *Jazzman*, no. 159: 47–48.
- Derrida, Jacques. 2005. *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. Thinking in Action. London ; New York: Routledge.
- Diagne, Khady Fall. 2018. *Le Marronnage Comme Essai d'esthétique Littéraire Négro-Africaine Contemporaine: Senghor et Césaire Ou La Langue Décolonisée*. Critiques Littéraires. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Diagne, Souleymane Bachir. 2016. *The Ink of the Scholars: Reflections on Philosophy in Africa*. Dakar: CODESRIA. <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/55812/>.
- Diawara, Manthia. 2010. 'Édouard Glissant's Worldmentality: An Introduction to One World in Relation'. *Documenta* #14. 2010. https://www.documenta14.de/en/south/34_edouard_glissant_s_worldmentality_an_introduction_to_one_world_in_relation.
- Diawara, Manthia. 2015. *Négritude – A Dialogue Between Wole Soyinka and Senghor*. K-12.
- Diawara, Manthia. n.d. *One World in Relation*. K'a Yéléma Production.
- Diawara, Manthia, and Glissant, Édouard. 2011. 'Édouard Glissant in Conversation with Manthia Diawara'. *Journal of Contemporary African Art*, no. 28: 4–19.
- Dieterich, Antje. 2019. *Solidarity Cities Lokale Strategien gegen Rassismus und Neoliberalismus*.
- Dimock, Wai-chee. 2003. 'Planetary Time and Global Translation: “Context” in Literary Studies'.

Common Knowledge 9 (3): 488–507.

- Drabinski, John E. 2013. *Levinas and the Postcolonial: Race, Nation, Other*.
- Drabinski, John E., and Marisa Parham, eds. 2015. *Theorizing Glissant: Sites and Citations. Creolizing the Canon*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield International.
- Dübgen, Franziska, and Stefan Skupien, eds. 2015. *Afrikanische politische Philosophie: postkoloniale Positionen*. Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 2143. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Duedahl, Poul, ed. 2018. *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts*. Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2016. London New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Düttmann, Alexander Garcia. 2019. 'Der Naive Übersetzer'. *Lettre Internationale*, Spring 2019.
- Edjabe, Ntone. 2011. Embracing Opacity: Interview with Ntone Edjabe Interview by März, Moses. AfricAvenir e.V. Website. <http://www.africavenir.org/fr/archives-news/newsdetails/datum///embracing-opacity-interview-with-ntone-edjabe-chimurenga-magazine.html>.
- Ehrmann, Jeanette. 2019. 'Call for Abstracts: Postkolonialität Und Die Krise Der Demokratie'. 9 December 2019. <http://zpth.de/pages/call-for-papers.php>.
- Eisner, Will. 2008. *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practices from the Legendary Cartoonist*. The Will Eisner Library. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Éloi-Blézès, Juliette, and Glissant, Sylvie. 2018. 'Une Histoire de l'IME and Entretien Avec Juliette Éloi-Blézès Avec Sylvie Glissant'. Institut du Tout Monde. 11 June 2018. <http://tout-monde.com/seminaire.html>.
- Espíndola, Laura Liliana Gómez. 2016. 'Plato on the Political Role of Poetry: The Expulsion of the Traditional Poets and the Reform of Poetry'. *Praxis Filosófica*, December, 37–56.
- Eubanks, Kevin. 2017. 'After Blackness, Then Blackness: Afro-Pessimism, Black Life, and Classical Hip Hop as Counter-Performance'. *Journal of Hip Hop Studies* 4 (1): 1–18.
- 'Exodus'. n.d. In *Cambridge Dictionary*. Accessed 28 March 2020. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-malaysian/exodus>.
- Fabian, Johannes. 2014. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Farrington, Constance. New York: Grove Press.
- . 2008. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New ed. Get Political. London: Pluto-Press.
- 'Faut-Il En Finir Avec l'universalisme ?' *Le Débat Norman Ajari/Etienne Balibar*. 2017. Paroles d'Honneur. La Colonie, Paris. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CINoTYzwBNg>.
- Ferdinand, Malcom. 2019. *Une Écologie Décoloniale: Penser l'écologie Depuis Le Monde Caribéen*. Anthropocène Seuil. Paris XIXe: Éditions du Seuil.
- Forsdick, Charles. 2010a. 'Late Glissant: History, "World Literature," and the Persistence of the Political'. *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 14 (3): 121–34. <https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-2010-027>.
- . 2010b. 'Late Glissant: History, "World Literature," and the Persistence of the Political'. *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 14 (3): 121–34. <https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-2010-027>.
- Forsdick, Charles, and David Murphy, eds. 2003. *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction*. London : New York: Arnold ; Distributed in the United States of America by Oxford University Press.

- Foucault, Michel. 1977. 'The Political Function of the Intellectual'. Translated by Colin Gordon. *Radical Philosophy*, no. 17: 12–14.
- . 1990. *The History of Sexuality*. Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books.
- . 2010. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*. Translated by Graham Burchell. Paperback edition. Michel Foucault's Lectures at the Collège de France. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- . 2003. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*. Translated by Mauro Bertani, Alessandro Fontana, François Ewald, and David Macey. New York: Picador.
- Friese, Heidrun. 2004. 'Spaces of Hospitality'. Translated by James Keye. *Angelaki* 9 (2): 67–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725042000272753>.
- Funke, Peter N., Lamas, Andrew T., and Wolfson, Todd. 2017. 'Bouazizi's Refusal and Ours: Critical Reflections on the Great Refusal and Contemporary Social Movements'. In *The Great Refusal: Herbert Marcuse and Contemporary Social Movements*, edited by Lamas et al., 1–29. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Gallagher, Mary. 2008a. 'Relating (in Theory) in a Globalized World: Between Levinas' Ethics and Glissant's Poetics'. In *World Writing: Poetics, Ethics, Globalization*, edited by Gallagher, Mary, 86–121. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- . 2008b. *World Writing Poetics, Ethics, Globalization*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442689657>.
- Ganesh, Bharath. 2016. 'The Politics of the Cipher: Hip-Hop, Antiphony and Multiculturalism'. PhD Thesis, University College London. <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1549862/1/PhD%20Edited%20Version%20Copyright%20Material%20Removed.pdf>.
- Garuba, Harry. 2002. 'Mapping the Land/ Body/ Subject: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies in African Narrative'. *Alternation* 9 (1): 87–116.
- Garuba, Harry, and Benghe Okot. 2017. 'Lateral Texts and Circuits of Value: Okot p'Bitek's "Song of Lawino" and "Wer Pa Lawino"'. *Social Dynamics* 43 (2): 312–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02533952.2017.1372054>.
- Geisler, Antonia. 2017. 'Locke, John'. In *Demokratiethorien: von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart: Texte und Interpretationshilfen*, edited by Peter Massing, Gotthard Breit, Hubertus Buchstein, and Antonia Geisler, 9. Auflage, 103–12. Schwalbach/Ts: Wochenschau Verlag.
- General Command of the EZLN. 1993. 'First Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle: EZLN's Declaration of War "Today We Say 'enough Is Enough!' (Ya Basta!)". 1993. <http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezln/ezlnwa.html>.
- Genovese, Eugene D. 1992. *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World*. 9. print. The Walter Lynwood Fleming Lectures in Southern History. Baton Rouge, La: Louisiana State Univ. Press.
- Gibson, Nigel C. 2011. *Fanonian Practices in South Africa: From Steve Biko to Abahlali BaseMjondolo*. 1st ed. New York : Scotsville, South Africa: Palgrave Macmillan ; University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
- Gilligan, Carol. 1982. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Gilroy, Paul. 2009. *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* Repr. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Giuffrida, Angela. 2018. 'In Italy's "Hospitality Town", Migrants Fight to Save Mayor Who Gave

- Them a New Home'. *The Guardian (UK)*, 7 October 2018. In Italy's 'hospitality town', migrants fight to save mayor who gave them a new home.
- Glissant, Édouard. 1957. 'Le Romancier Noir et Son Peuple - Notes Pour Une Conférence'. *Présence Africaine*, no. No. 16 (November): 26–31.
- . 1981. *Le Discours Antillais*. Paris: Seuil.
- . 1984. *La lézarde: roman*. Collection Points. Sér. Roman Texte integral 164. Paris: Éd. du Seuil.
- . 1990. *Poétique de La Relation*. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 1991. *Die Entdecker der Nacht*. Translated by Beate Thill. Heidelberg: Wunderhorn.
- . 1993. *Malemort: roman*. Paris: Éd. du Seuil.
- . 1994. *Poèmes Complets*. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 1996. *Introduction à Une Poétique Du Divers*. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 1997. *Le Quatrième Siècle: Roman*. Paris: Editions Gallimard.
- . 1997. *L'intention Poétique*. Poétique 2. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 1997. *Mahagony: roman*. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 1997. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing. University of Michigan Press.
- . 1997. *Soleil de La Conscience*. Poétique 1. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 1997. *Traité Du Tout-Monde*. Poétique 4. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 1998. *La case du commandeur: roman*. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 1999. *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. Translated by J. Michael Dash. CARAF Books. Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia.
- . 1999. *Faulkner, Mississippi*. Translated by Barbara Lewis. 1st Farrar, Straus and Giroux ed. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- . 1999. *Sartorius: Le Roman Des Batoutos*. Paris, France: Gallimard.
- . 2000. *Le Monde Incréé: Poésie*. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 2003. *Ormerod*. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 2005. 'Images de l'Être: Lieux de l'Imaginaire'. *Che Vuoi?*, no. 25: 215–21.
- . 2005. *La Cohée Du Lamentin*. Poétique 5. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 2005. *Monsieur Toussaint: A Play*. Translated by Michael J. Dash. Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- . 2006. 'Images de l'Être, Lieux de l'Imaginaire'. *Che vuoi ?* 25 (1): 213. <https://doi.org/10.3917/chev.025.0213>.
- . 2006. *Une Nouvelle Région Du Monde*. Esthétique / Édouard Glissant 1. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 2006. 'Éloge Des Différents et de La Difference: Opening Speech at the 6th International Literatur Festival'. Haus der Berliner Festspiele (Berlin), September 5. <https://www.literaturfestival.com/medien/texte/eroeffnungsreden/speech-glissant-2006>.
- . 2007. *Mémoires Des Esclavages: La Fondation d'un Centre National Pour La Mémoire Des Esclavages et de Leurs Abolitions*. Paris: Gallimard : Documentation française.
- . 2007. *Poétique de la Relation*. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 2008. 'Cultural Journals and Europe'. Translated by Bond, Niall. Eurozine.Com. 26 November 2008. <https://www.eurozine.com/cultural-journals-and-europe/>.

- . 2009. *Philosophie de La Relation: Poésie En Étendue*. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 2010. *10 mai: mémoires de la traite négrière, de l'esclavage et de leurs abolitions*. Paris: Galaade Éd.
- . 2010. *La terre, le feu, l'eau et les vents: une anthologie de la poésie du tout-monde*. Paris: Galaade.
- . 2011. *The Overseer's Cabin*. Translated by Betsy Wing. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- . 2011. *Tout-monde: roman*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Glissant, Édouard, and Patrick Chamoiseau. 2007. *Quand les murs tombent: l'identité nationale hors-la-loi?* Paris: Ed. Galaade [u.a.].
- . 2009. *L'intraitable Beauté Du Monde: Adresse à Barack Obama*. Paris: Galaade : Institut du tout-monde.
- . 2011. *Brief an Barack Obama: die unbezähmbare Schönheit der Welt*. Translated by Beate Thill. Heidelberg, Neckar: Das Wunderhorn.
- Glissant, Édouard, and Lise Gauvin. 2010. *L'imaginaire Des Langues: Entretiens Avec Lise Gauvin (1991-2009)*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Glissant, Édouard, and Alexandre Leupin. 2008. *Les Entretiens de Bâton Rouge*. Paris, France: Gallimard.
- Glissant, Édouard, and Ulrich Obrist. 2005. 'Utopie de La Ville et Du Musée. L'espace et Le Temps'. <https://www.tout-monde.com/sites/utopie.pdf>.
- Glissant, Édouard, and Sylvie Séma. 2007. *La Terre Magnétique: Les Errances de Rapa Nui, l'île de Pâques*. Peuples de l'eau. Paris: Seuil.
- . 2010. *Das magnetische Land: die Irrfahrt der Osterinsel Rapa Nui*. Translated by Beate Thill. Völker am Wasser. Heidelberg: Wunderhorn.
- Göhler, Gerhard, Mattias Iser, and Ina Kerner, eds. 2011. *Politische Theorie: 25 umkämpfte Begriffe zur Einführung*. 2., aktualisierte und erw. Aufl. Wiesbaden: VS Verl. für Sozialwiss.
- Goldhill, Simon. 2002. *The Invention of Prose. Greece & Rome*, no. 32. Oxford ; New York: Published for the Classical Association [by] Oxford University Press.
- Ha, Kien Nghi. 2003. 'Die Kolonialen Muster Deutscher Arbeitsmigrationspolitik'. In *Spricht Die Subalterne Deutsch? Migration Und Postkoloniale Kritik*, edited by Steyerl, Hito, 56–107. Münster: Unrast.
- . 2009. 'Deutsche Integrationspolitik Als Koloniale Praxis.'". In *Kritik Des Okzidentalismus: Transdisziplinäre Beiträge Zu (Neo-) Orientalismus Und Geschlecht*, edited by Dieze, Gabriele, Brunner, Claudia, and Wenzel, Edith, 137–50.
- Hallward, Peter. 2001. *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing between the Singular and the Specific*. Angelaki Humanities. Manchester [England] : New York: Manchester University Press ; Distributed exclusively in the USA by Palgrave.
- Hardy, Stacy. 2015. 'A Brief History of Mapping'. *Chimurenga Chronic*, April 2015.
- Harney, Stefano, and Fred Moten. 2013a. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*. Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions.
- . 2013b. 'The Wild Beyond: With and For the Undercommons'. In *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, 2–13. Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions.
- Hayot, E. 2011. 'On Literary Worlds'. *Modern Language Quarterly* 72 (2): 129–61.

- <https://doi.org/10.1215/00267929-1161286>.
- Heil, Tilmann. 2014. 'Are Neighbours Alike? Practices of Conviviality in Catalonia and Casamance'. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17 (4): 452–70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549413510420>.
- Hein, Michael. 2017. 'Niklas Luhmann'. In *Demokratietheorien: von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart: Texte und Interpretationshilfen*, edited by Peter Massing et al., 9. Auflage, 295–304. Schwalbach/Ts: Wochenschau Verlag.
- Held, David, Anthony G. McGrew, David Goldblatt, and Jonathan Perraton, eds. 2002. *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ. Press.
- Hiddleston, Jane. 2009. 'Interpretation Politique et Théorie Postcoloniale : Le Moi, l'autre et Les Incertitudes de La Critique'. In *Littératures Francophones et Politique*, edited by Jean Bessière, 51–62. Lettres Du Sud. Paris: Karthala.
- Holston, James, ed. 1999. *Cities and Citizenship*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press.
- Honychurch, Lennox, ed. 2006. *The Caribbean People. Book 2, [Schülerbd.]*: ... 3rd ed. Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes.
- ICORN Cities of Refuge. n.d. 'ICORN Cities of Refuge'. Accessed 28 March 2020. <https://www.icorn.org/icorn-cities-refuge>.
- Institut du Tout Monde. n.d. 'Le Musée Du Tout-Monde'. <http://www.tout-monde.com/m2a2.html>.
- . n.d. 'Les Memoires Des Esclavages'. www.lesmemoiresdesesclavages.com.
- Johnson, Linton Kwesi. 1983. *Making History*. Mango Records.
- Jörke, Dirk. 2017. 'Colin Crouch'. In *Demokratietheorien: von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart: Texte und Interpretationshilfen*, edited by Peter Massing et al., 9. Auflage, 323–27. Schwalbach/Ts: Wochenschau Verlag.
- Joubert, Jean-Louis. 2005. *Édouard Glissant*. Paris: ADPF, Ministère des Affaires étrangères.
- Jules-Rosette, Bennetta. 1998. *Black Paris: The African Writers' Landscape*. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press.
- Julien, Eileen, Mildred Mortimer, Curtis Schade, and African Literature Association, eds. 1986. *African Literature in Its Social and Political Dimensions: These Papers Were Selected from the 9. Annual Meeting of the African Literature Association, April 6-9, 1983, at the University of Illinois, Champaign/Urbana, Illinois*. Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press.
- Jung, Hwa Yol. 2007. 'Edouard Glissant's Aesthetics of Relation as Diversality and Creolization'. In *Postcolonialism and Political Theory*, edited by Persram, Nalini, 193–225. Lanham, Md. Boulder New York Toronto, Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books.
- Kassab-Charfi, Samia. 2011. *Et l'une et l'autre Face Des Choses: La Déconstruction Poétique de l'Histoire Dans Les Indes et Le Sel Noir d'Edouard Glissant*. Paris: Honoré Champion.
- Kellner, Douglas. 2017. 'Insurrection 2011: Great Refusals from the Arab Uprisings through Occupy Everywhere'. In *The Great Refusal: Herbert Marcuse and Contemporary Social Movements*, edited by Lamas et al., 211–29. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Kempf, Victor Immanuel. 2019. *Exodus oder dialektische Negation: Paradigmen der Kapitalismuskritik im Widerstreit*. Philosophie & Kritik. Neue Beiträge zur politischen Philosophie und Kritischen Theorie. Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer VS.
- Kerner, Ina. 2006. In *Politische Theorie: 22 umkämpfte Begriffe zur Einführung*, edited by Gerhard Göhler, Unveränd. Nachdr. der 1. Aufl, 190–208. Wiesbaden: VS, Verl. für Sozialwiss.

- . 2015. 'Zeiten Und Räume Der Demokratie. Beobachtungen Nach Dem Eurozentrismus'. *Leviathan* 43 (30): 47–64.
- . 2016. 'Frantz Fanon in Der Politikwissenschaft Potentiale Einer Rezeption'. In *Postkoloniale Politikwissenschaft*, edited by Aram Ziai. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag. <https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839432310-005>.
- . 2019. 'Grenzen Und Migration. Postkoloniale Perspektiven'. *Zeitschrift Für Politik* 66 (2): 199–216. <https://doi.org/10.5771/0044-3360-2019-2-199>.
- Kien Nghi Ha, Nicola Lauré al-Samarai, and Sheila Mysorekar, eds. 2016. *re/visionen: postkoloniale Perspektiven von People of Color auf Rassismus, Kulturpolitik und Widerstand in Deutschland*. 2. unveränderte Auflage. Münster: UNRAST-Verlag.
- Kirchgassner, Brooks. 2013. 'Frantz Fanon and the Challenge of Political Theory'. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2348380>.
- Kopytoff, Igor, ed. 1989. *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*. 1. Midland book ed. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press.
- Kotef, Hagar. 2015. *Movement and the Ordering of Freedom: On Liberal Governances of Mobility. Perverse Modernities*. Durham ; London: Duke University Press.
- Kreide, Regina, and Andreas Niederberger. 2011. 'Politik'. In *Politische Theorie. 25 Umkämpfte Begriffe Zur Einführung*, edited by Göhler, Gerhard et al., 290–306. Wiesbaden: VS.
- . eds. 2016. *Internationale Politische Theorie: eine Einführung*. Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler.
- Kulberg, Christina. 2013. 'Île de France: The Construction of an Insular City in the Work of Édouard Glissant'. In *Metropolitan Mosaics and Melting-Pots: Paris and Montreal in Francophone Literatures*, edited by Pascale De Souza and Murdoch, Adlai H, 117–35. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publ.
- Lachaud, Dorothée. 2016. 'Nos Ancêtres Les Gaulois'. Mayotte 1.
- Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe, and Jean-Luc Nancy. 1997. *Retreating the Political*. Edited by Simon Sparks. Warwick Studies in European Philosophy. London ; New York: Routledge.
- Lamas, Andrew T., Wolfson, Todd, and Funke, Peter, eds. 2017. *The Great Refusal: Herbert Marcuse and Contemporary Social Movements*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Lambert, Michael. 2016. 'Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World by Gary Wilder'. *Anthropological Quarterly* 89 (2): 627–32. <https://doi.org/10.1353/anq.2016.0032>.
- Laming, George. 2004. *The Sovereignty of the Imagination*. Kingston, Jamaica: Arawak Pub.
- Lamoureux, Gérard, ed. 2019. *Cent Ans de Poesie En Martinique - Une Anthologie 1903 - 2017*. Gosier/Gouadeloupe: Long Cours.
- Laroche, Maximilien. 2005. 'Alain Baudot, Bibliographie Annotée d'Édouard Glissant'. *Études Littéraires* 27 (2): 151–57. <https://doi.org/10.7202/501088ar>.
- Lasowski, Aliocha Wald. 2015. *Édouard Glissant, penseur des archipels*. Paris: Pocket. <http://banq.pretnumerique.ca/accueil/isbn/9782823806342>.
- Le Bris, Michel, Jean Rouaud, and Eva Almassy, eds. 2007. *Pour Une Littérature-Monde*. Paris, France: Gallimard.
- Lebel, Jean-Jacques. 1982. 'War on War'. *Unesco Courier*, 1982.
- Leupin, Alexandre. 2016. *Edouard Glissant, Philosophe: Héraclite et Hegel Dans Le Tout-Monde*. Paris: Editions Hermann.

- Levine, Caroline. 2015. *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*. Princeton Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Liang, Stuart, Philips, Deborah, and Shaw, Katy. 2013. 'Literature and Politics'. In *The Politics of Literature and the Literature of Politics*, 16–22. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lionnet, Françoise, and Shumei Shi, eds. 2011. *The Creolization of Theory*. Durham [NC]: Duke University Press.
- Lippert, Randy, and Sean Rehaag, eds. 2014. *Sanctuary Practices in International Perspectives: Migration, Citizenship and Social Movements*. First issued in paperback 2014. Abingdon, Oxon New York, NY: Routledge.
- Loichot, Valérie. 2013. 'Édouard Glissant's Graves'. *Callaloo* 36 (4): 1014–32.
- . ed. 2013. *Entours d'Édouard Glissant*. Revue Des Sciences Humaines 309. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Septentrion presses universitaires diffusion.
- Lorey, Isabell. 2008. 'Attempt to Think the Plebeian Exodus and Constituting as Critique'. Translated by Derieg, Aileen. Transversal.At. April 2008. <https://transversal.at/transversal/0808/lorey/en>.
- . 2015. *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*. Translated by Aileen Derieg. Futures. London ; New York: Verso.
- Maguire, Paddy. 2013. 'Literature, Politics and History'. In *Literary Politics: The Politics of Literature and the Literature of Politics*, edited by Philips, Deborah and Shaw, Katy, 95–114. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Maldoror, Sarah. 1976. *Aimé Césaire*. INA. <https://videotheque.cnrs.fr//visio=407>.
- Malela, Buata B. 2008. *Les Écrivains Afro-Antillais à Paris (1920-1960): Stratégies et Postures Identitaires*. Lettres Du Sud. Paris: Karthala.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- Marchart, Oliver. 2010. *Die Politische Differenz: Zum Denken Des Politischen Bei Nancy, Lefort, Badiou, Laclau Und Agamben*. Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 1956. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Marcuse, Herbert. 2007. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Translated by Douglas Kellner. Repr. Routledge Classics Philosophy. London: Routledge.
- Marley, Damian. 2017. *Slave Mill*. Ghetto Youths United.
- Massing, Peter, Gotthard Breit, Hubertus Buchstein, and Antonia Geisler, eds. 2017. *Demokratietheorien: von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart: Texte und Interpretationshilfen*. 9. Auflage. Schwalbach/Ts: Wochenschau Verlag.
- Mbembe, Achille. 2009. *Variations on the Beautiful in the Congolese World of Sounds*. Chimurenganyana. Cape Town: Chimurenga.
- . 2011. 'Democracy as a Community of Life'. *JWTC Salon* 4: 1–6.
- . 2015. 'Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive'. Presented at the Rhodes Must Fall Movement, University of Cape Town, April 29. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-IU4BCsL8w>.
- . 2016. *Politiques de l'inimitié*. Paris: La Découverte.
- . 2018. 'The Idea of a Borderless World'. Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Yale

- University, March 28. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKm6HPCSXDY>.
- . 2015. *Critique de la raison nègre*. Paris: La Découverte/Poche.
- M'Bow, Amadou-Mahtar. 1982. *Where the Future Begins*. Paris: Unesco.
- McKinnon, Karen D., and Caecilia Tripp. 2008. *Making History*. B3 Media.
- Ménil, Alain. 2011. *Les Voies de La Créolisation*. Paris: De L'incidence Éditeur.
- Mennel, Birgit, Stefan Nowotny, and Marta Malo de Molina, eds. 2014. *Was ist dein Streik? Militante Streifzüge durch die Kreisläufe der Prekarität: Precarias a la deriva*. Wien Linz: transversal texts.
- Meyer, Thomas. 2003. *Was ist Politik? 2.*, überarb. und erw. Aufl. UTB für Wissenschaft Uni-Taschenbücher Politikwissenschaft 2135. Opladen: Leske + Budrich.
- Mignolo, Walter. 2011. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations. Durham: Duke University Press.
- . 2007a. 'Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of de-Coloniality'. *Cultural Studies* 21 (2–3): 449–514. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162647>.
- Mignolo, Walter D., and Madina V. Tlostanova. 2006. 'Theorizing from the Borders: Shifting to Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge'. *European Journal of Social Theory* 9 (2): 205–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431006063333>.
- Miller, Christopher L. 2008. *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Miller, David. 2010. 'Why Immigration Controls Are Not Coercive: A Reply to Arash Abizadeh'. *Political Theory* 38 (1): 111–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591709348194>.
- Miller, Kei. 2014. *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion*. Manchester: Carcanet.
- Mintz, Sidney W. 1986. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Moretti, Franco. 2000. 'Conjectures on World Literature'. *New Left Review*, no. 1 (February): 54–68.
- Moten, Fred. 2015. 'Blackness and Poetry'. *Evening Will Come*, no. 55. <https://arcade.stanford.edu/content/blackness-and-poetry-0>.
- . 2018. *Stolen Life*. Consent Not to Be a Single Being, v. 2. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Moten, Fred, and Harney, Stefano. 2013. The Alternative is at HandChimurenga Chronic.
- Moten, Fred, and Hartman, Saidiya. 2018. To Refuse That Which Has Been Refused To YouChimurenga Chronoic. <https://chimurengachronic.co.za/to-refuse-that-which-has-been-refused-to-you-2/>.
- Moulier Boutang, Yann. 1998. *De l'esclavage Au Salarial: Économie Historique Du Salarial Bridé*. Actuel Marx Confrontation. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- Muiu, Mueni wa, and Guy Martin. 2008. *A New Paradigm of the African State: Fundi Wa Afrika*. 1st ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nagel, Thomas. 2005. 'The Problem of Global Justice'. *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 33 (2): 113–45.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. 1991. *The Inoperative Community*. Translated by Connor, Peter, Garbus, Lisa, Halland, Michael, and Swahney, Simona. Theory and History of Literature, v. 76. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

- . 2000. *Being Singular Plural*. Meridian, Crossing Aesthetics. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.
- Nesbitt, Nick. 2013a. *Caribbean Critique: Antillean Critical Theory from Toussaint to Glissant*. Contemporary French and Francophone Cultures 26. Liverpool: Liverpool Univ. Press.
- . 2013b. 'Politiques et Poétiques. Les Errances de l'absolu'. In *Revue Des Sciences Humaines* 309: 155–169.
- . 2003. *Voicing Memory: History and Subjectivity in French Caribbean Literature*. New World Studies. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. 1981. *Writers in Politics: Essays*. Studies in African Literature. London ; Exeter, N.H: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Niederhoff, Burkhard. 2013. 'Focalization'. The Living Handbook of Narratology. 24 September 2013. <https://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/18.html>.
- Norvat, Manuel. 2015. *Le Chant Du Divers: Introduction à La Philopoétique d'Édouard Glissant*. Collection 'Ouverture Philosophique'. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Noudelmann, François. 2018. *Édouard Glissant: L'identité Génereuse*. Grandes Biographies. Paris: Flammarion.
- Nowicka, Magdalena, and Steven Vertovec. 2014. 'Comparing Convivialities: Dreams and Realities of Living-with-Difference'. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17 (4): 341–56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549413510414>.
- Nwankwo, Ifeoma Kiddoe. 2005. *Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness and Transnational Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Americas*. Rethinking the Americas. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Nzegwu, Nkiru. 1994. 'Gender Equality in a Dual-Sex System: The Case of Onitsha'. *Canadian Journal of Law & Jurisprudence* 7 (1): 73–95. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0841820900002575>.
- Obszyński, Michał. 2016. *Manifestes et Programmes Littéraires Aux Caraïbes Francophones. En/Jeux Idéologiques et Poétiques*. Francopolyphonies. Leiden: Brill / Rodopi.
- Okolo, M. S. C. 2007. *African Literature as Political Philosophy*. Africa in the New Millennium. London: Zed Books.
- Olivier, Bert. 2008. 'Foucault on Intellectuals'. Mail and Guardian - Thought Leader. 23 September 2008. <https://thoughtleader.co.za/bertolivier/2008/09/23/foucault-on-intellectuals/>.
- Olsson, Gunnar. 2007. *Abysmal : A Critique of Cartographic Reason*. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Orlando, Leoluca. 2015. 'INTERNATIONAL HUMAN MOBILITY CHARTER OF PALERMO 2015: From the Migration as Suffering to Mobility as an Inalienable Human Right'. City of Palermo. https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/ICP/IDM/2015_CMC/Session-IIIb/Orlando/PDF-CARTA-DI-PALERMO-Statement.pdf.
- Parry, Benita. 2004. *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*. London; New York: Routledge. http://openurl.quebec.ca:9003/uqam?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&url_ctx_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&ctx_enc=info:ofi/enc:UTF-8&ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/sfxit.com:azlist&sfx.ignore_date_threshold=1&rft.isbn=9780203420539.
- Persram, Nalini, ed. 2007. *Postcolonialism and Political Theory*. Global Encounters: Studies in Comparative Political Theory. Lanham, Md. Boulder New York Toronto, Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books.

- Pesch, Volker. 2017. 'Alexis de Tocqueville'. In *Demokratietheorien: von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart: Texte und Interpretationshilfen*, edited by Peter Massing et al., 9. Auflage, 169–77. Schwalbach/Ts: Wochenschau Verlag.
- Philips, Deborah, and Katy Shaw, eds. 2013. *Literary Politics: The Politics of Literature and the Literature of Politics*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pile, Steve, and Nigel Thrift. 2005. *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation*. <http://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=254123>.
- Poinsot, Marie, Nicolas Treiber, and Maryse Condé. 2013. 'Entretien Avec Maryse Condé'. *Hommes & Migration*, no. 1301: 182–88.
- Polkinghorne, Donald. 2004. *Practice and the Human Sciences: The Case for a Judgment-Based Practice of Care*. SUNY Series in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Price, Richard, ed. 1996. *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*. 3rd ed. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Quijano, Anibal. 2000. 'Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America'. Translated by Michael Ennis. *Neplanta: Views from the South* 1 (3): 533–80.
- Rajachman, John. 2000. *The Deleuze Connections*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Ramose, Mogobe B. 2002. *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*. Harare: Mond Books.
- Rancière, Jacques. 1999. *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- . 2001. 'Ten Theses on Politics'. Translated by Davide Panagia and Rachel Bowlby. *Theory & Event* 5 (3). <https://doi.org/10.1353/tae.2001.0028>.
- . 2011. *Politics of Literature*. Translated by Julie Rose. Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity.
- Rekacewicz, Philippe. 2013. 'Radical Cartography Is How I Speak: Philippe Rekacewicz at TEDxArendal'. TEDx Talk, Narestø, Sørlandet, September 10. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=coiEVbaBQuc>.
- Rifkin, Mark. 2017. *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination*. Durham ; London: Duke University Press.
- Robbins, Bruce. 1992. 'Comparative Cosmopolitanism'. *Social Text*, no. 31/32: 169–86.
- . 2012. 'Uses of World Literature'. In *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*, edited by Theo d'Haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir, 1. publ. in paperback, 383–92. London: Routledge.
- Roberts, Neil. 2015. *Freedom as Marronage*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Robertson, David. 2002. *A Dictionary of Modern Politics*. 3rd ed. London ; New York: Europa Publications.
- Robinson, Cedric J. 2000. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press.
- Rolshoven, Johanna, and Ingo Schneider, eds. 2018. *Dimensionen Des Politischen: Ansprüche Und Herausforderungen Der Empirischen Kulturwissenschaft*. Berlin: Neofelis Verlag.
- Rothendler, Rachel. 2015. 'Pleasure and Jouissance: The Martinican Lived Experience – A Transation of and Commentary On Édouard Glissant's Essay "Plaisir et Jouissance: Le Vécu Martiniquais"'. *JWTC Salon* 10: 38–48.
- Rosa, Hartmut, Lars Gertenbach, Henning Laux, and David Strecker. 2010. *Theorien der*

Gemeinschaft zur Einführung. Hamburg: Junius.

- Roth, Klaus. 2017. 'Antike'. In *Demokratiethorien: Von Der Antike Bis Zur Gegenwart*, edited by Massing et al., 17–52. Schwalbach/Ts: Wochenschau Verlag.
- Salmon, Christian. 1999. 'Against the Tyranny of Uniformity'. *Unesco Courier*, April 1999.
- Santos, Boaventura de Sousa. 2019. 'Toward and Aesthetics of the Epistemologies of the South (Twenty-Two Theses)'. In *Art, the Political and Multiple Truths*, 130–51. London: Koenig Books Ltd.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. 2007. *L'imaginaire: psychologie phénoménologique de l'imagination*. Collection Folio Essais 47. Paris: Gallimard.
- Saucier, P. Khalil, and Tryon P. Woods. 2014. 'Ex Aqua: The Mediterranean Basin, Africans on the Move, and the Politics of Policing'. *Theoria* 61 (141).
<https://doi.org/10.3167/th.2014.6114104>.
- Scott, David. 1999. *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality*. Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- Scott, David, and George Lamming. 2002. 'The Sovereignty of the Imagination: An Interview with George Lamming'. *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 6 (2): 72–200.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/-6-2-72>.
- Scott, James C. 2012. *Two Cheers for Anarchism: Six Easy Pieces on Autonomy, Dignity, and Meaningful Work and Play*. Paperback ed. Princeton, NJ Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Scruton, Roger. 2007. *The Palgrave Macmillan Dictionary of Political Thought 3ed*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=293811>.
- Shilliam, Robbie. 2011. 'Decolonising the Grounds of Ethical Inquiry: A Dialogue between Kant, Foucault and Glissant'. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 39 (3): 649–65.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829811399144>.
- . 2016. 'Colonial Architecture or Relatable Hinterlands? Locke, Nandy, Fanon, and the Bandung Spirit: Colonial Architecture or Relatable Hinterlands: Robbie Shilliam'. *Constellations* 23 (3): 425–35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12163>.
- Siskin, Clifford. 2001. 'Novels and Systems'. *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 34 (2): 202.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1346215>.
- Smit, Sarah. 2017. 'Finding Affiliations: Reading Communities, Literary Institutions and Small Magazines'. *Africa in Words*. 21 October 2017.
<https://africanwords.com/2017/10/21/finding-affiliations-reading-communities-literary-institutions-small-magazines/>.
- Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. 2010. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Solidarity City. n.d. 'A City for All'. Solidarity-City.Eu. <https://solidarity-city.eu/en/>.
- Sörensen, Paul. 2019. 'Cornelius Castoriadis'. In *Radikale Demokratiethorie: Ein Handbuch*, Originalausgabe, erste Auflage, 239–47. Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 2248. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 2003. *Death of a Discipline*. The Wellek Library Lectures in Critical Theory. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 2014. *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis. <https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1679195>.
- Sriramesh, Krishnamurthy, and Dejan Verčič, eds. 2003. *The Global Public Relations Handbook*:

Theory, Research, and Practice. LEA's Communication Series. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Stahler-Sholk, Richard. 2007. 'Resisting Neoliberal Homogenization: The Zapatista Autonomy Movement'. *Latin American Perspectives* 34 (2): 48–63.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X06298747>.
- Suk, Jeannie. 2001. *Postcolonial Paradoxes in French Caribbean Writing: Césaire, Glissant, Condé*. Oxford Modern Languages and Literature Monographs. Oxford: Clarendon.
- The Living and the Dead Ensemble. 2020. *Ouverture*. Olivier Marboeuf.
- The Otolith Group. 2017. @GlissantBot. Twitter channel. <http://otolithgroup.org/index.php?m=project&id=217>.
- Thill, Beate. 2011. 'Das Imaginäre'. In *Brief an Barack Obama: die unbezähmbare Schönheit der Welt*, 5–8. Heidelberg, Neckar: Das Wunderhorn.
- Thompson, Alvin O. 2006. *Flight to Freedom: African Runaways and Maroons in the Americas*. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press.
- Touam Bona, Dénètem. 2016a. *Fugitif, Où Cours-Tu ? Des Mots*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . 2016b. 'Heroic land: Spectrographie de la « Frontière »'. *Chimères* 90 (3): 155.
<https://doi.org/10.3917/chime.090.0155>.
- Trautmann, Felix. 2019. 'Das Imaginäre'. In *Radikale Demokratietheorie: Ein Handbuch*, Originalausgabe, erste Auflage, 553–62. Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 2248. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Turner, Jack. 2017. 'Democracy, Freedom, and Afro-Modern Political Thought: The Time Is Always Now: Black Thought and the Transformation of US Democracy Nick Bromell, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, 200pp., ISBN: 9780199973439 Freedom as Marronage Neil Roberts, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2015, 264pp., ISBN: 9780226201047'. *Contemporary Political Theory* 16 (4): 532–40.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-017-0087-1>.
- van der Haak, Bregtje. 2016. 'Mobility as a Human Right'. VPRO Backlight.
<https://vimeo.com/201245656>.
- Vergès, Françoise, and Aimé Césaire. 2005. *Nègre Je Suis, Nègre Je Resterai*. Itinéraires Du Savoir. Paris: Albin Michel.
- Volz, Jochen, and Ngcobo, Gabi, eds. 2019. *Art, the Political and Multiple Truths*. London: Koenig Books Ltd.
- Weber, Max. 1946. 'Politics as a Vocation'. In *From Max Weber - Essays in Sociology*, 77–128. New York: Oxford University Press. <http://fs2.american.edu/dfagel/www/class%20readings/weber/politicsasavocation.pdf>.
- Wild, Thomas. 2006. *Hannah Arendt: Leben, Werk, Wirkung*. Orig.-Ausg., 1. Aufl. Suhrkamp-BasisBiographie 17. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Wilder, Gary. 2015. *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World*. Durham ; London: Duke University Press.
- Wilderson III, Frank B., Hartman, Saidiya, Martinot, Steve, and Sexton, Jared. 2017. *Afro-Pessimism: An Introduction*. Open Source.
<https://archive.org/details/AfroPessimismread/page/n7/mode/2up>.
- Wiredu, Kwasi. 2000. 'Democracy and Consensus in African Traditional Politics – A Plea for a Non-Party Polity'. *Polylog: Forum for Intercultural Philosophy*. 2000.

<https://them.polylog.org/2/fwk-en.htm>.

- Wynter, Sylvia. 1989. 'Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles'. *World Literature Today* 63 (4): 637–48.
- X, Malcolm. 1963. 'The Race Problem'. African Students Association and NAACP Campus Chapter, January 23. <http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/mxp/speeches/mxt17.html>.
- X, Malcolm, and Alex Haley. 1999. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Yow, Laura G. n.d. 'The Essay'. In *A History of Literature in the Caribbean*, edited by Arnold, James A, 329–349. Philadelphia: John Benjamins B.V.
- Zapf, Holger, Holger. 2016. In *Transkulturelle Politische Theorie: eine Einführung*, edited by Sybille de la Rosa, Sophia Schubert, and Holger Zapf, 87–112. Trans- und interkulturelle politische Theorie und Ideengeschichte. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Zeldin, Theodore. 2016. *The Hidden Pleasures of Life: A New Way of Remembering the Past and Imagining the Future*.
- Ziai, Aram, ed. 2016. *Postkoloniale Politikwissenschaft: Theoretische Und Empirische Zugänge*. Edition Politik, Band 27. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Ziegler, Marc. 2019. 'Michael Hardt Und Antonio Negri'. In *Radikale Demokratietheorie: Ein Handbuch*, Originalausgabe, erste Auflage, 304–16. Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 2248. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Zips, Werner. 1999. *Black rebels: African-Caribbean freedom fighters in Jamaica*. Kingston; Hadleigh: Ian Randle ; BRAD.

Appendix

I. German Thesis Summary

Die vorliegende Dissertation befasst sich mit der politischen Dimension des Werks von Édouard Glissant, einem auf Martinique geborenen Dichter und Schriftsteller (1928-2011), der zu den einflussreichsten aus der frankophonen Karibik stammenden Theoretiker*innen der postkolonialen Tradition gezählt wird. Durch eine Kombination von literatur- und politikwissenschaftlichen Ansätzen, wird Glissants Werk, das aus acht Romanen, 21 Essaybänden, zwei Theaterstücken sowie einer umfangreichen Gedichtsammlung besteht, als Ganzes studiert und auf seine politischen Potentiale geprüft. Kennzeichnend für den verfolgten Rechercheansatz ist ein weites Verständnis des Politischen, das sich von gängigen Vorstellungen der Auseinandersetzung mit politischen Systemen und Machtkämpfen unterscheidet, in dem es literarischer und kultureller Arbeit dezidiert politische Bedeutung zuschreibt. Das Konzept der Politik der Relation aufgreifend, welches in Glissants späteren Schriften erscheint, befasst sich diese Arbeit mit den Fragen, *was* ist die Politik der Relation? *Wie* kann sie beschrieben werden? Und *welche Verbindungen* lassen sich zwischen ihr und verwandten politischen Praktiken finden?

Die Forschungsarbeit kommt dabei zu dem Ergebnis, dass mit der Politik der Relation sowohl die diversen politischen Praktiken beschrieben werden können, die das Werk Glissants durchziehen, als auch außerhalb dieses Bereichs postkoloniale politische Praktiken analysiert werden können. Im erstgenannten Kontext bezieht sich der Begriff auf eine ganzheitliche und vielschichtige Praxis eines Dichters und Intellektuellen, dessen politisches Engagement in erster Linie auf Veränderungen im Bereich des Imaginären und der Erschaffung alternativer Gemeinschaften abzielte, der jedoch darüber hinaus wiederholt diskursiv und organisatorisch in bestehende Institutionen und Gemeinschaften intervenierte, um Relationen herzustellen, die von bestehenden Diskursen und politischen Strukturen unterbunden wurden. Im zweiten Kontext, also außerhalb von Glissants eigenem politischen Denken und Handeln, steht die Politik der Relation zudem als ein Begriff, der sowohl die Praxis von bestimmten Dichtern, Schriftstellern, Musikern und bildenden Künstlern betrifft, als auch das Engagement von Kollektiven, von Solidaritätsnetzwerken bis hin zu politischen Bewegungen und (para)staatlichen Akteuren. Die Besonderheit dieser Akteure ist, dass ihrem Handeln jeweils ein ganzheitlicher Anspruch zugrunde liegt, bei dem Inhalt und Form, Mittel und Zwecke nicht voneinander getrennt werden können und sich politische Praxis an der radikalen Diversität und Vernetzung aller Kulturen der Welt orientiert, aus ihr Kraft schöpft und sie zu beschützen anstrebt. Indem die Dissertation, deren Fokus auf der Beschreibung von Glissants eigener politischer Praxis liegt, wiederholt Verbindungen zwischen

diesen beiden Ebenen aufzeigt, ist sie methodisch ebenfalls relational angelegt. Wie die Forschung zu den hier aufgeführten Ergebnissen kommt, wird im Folgenden in einem Überblick über die in den einzelnen Kapitel verfolgten Analysen nachgezeichnet.

In Kapitel 1 wird zunächst der diskursive und disziplinarische Rahmen erörtert, aus dem sich die forschungsleitenden Fragen und Hypothesen der Dissertation ergeben. Dabei wird deutlich, dass das Interesse an Glissants politischer Arbeit, das der Recherche zugrunde liegt, aus drei sich ergänzenden Richtungen stammt. Einerseits nimmt es auf eine wissenschaftliche Debatte Bezug, die sich seit mehr als zwei Jahrzehnten mit der Frage befasst, wie die politischen Implikationen von Glissants literarischen, poetischen und theoretischen Arbeiten im geopolitischen Rahmen des 21. Jahrhundert eingeschätzt werden können. Im Rahmen von postkolonialen Forschungsansätzen gewinnt diese Diskussion zudem dadurch an Bedeutung, dass Glissant für sich beanspruchte, die Tradition prominenter Vorreiter der Postkolonialen Theorie – hier sind insbesondere die ebenfalls aus Martinique stammenden Aimé Césaire und Frantz Fanon zu nennen –, weiterentwickelt zu haben, eine Behauptung die es lohnt kritisch hinterfragt zu werden. Ein weiterer Fragenkomplex betrifft das Verhältnis von Politik und Literatur generell und insbesondere im Werk von Glissant. Wie im ersten Teil der Einleitung dargelegt wird (1.1.), betrifft diese Konstellation, die in Bezug auf postkoloniale Denktraditionen als zentral erachtet wird, die Frage, welche Theorie des Politischen ihnen zugrunde liegt.

Die konzeptionelle Arbeit im zweiten Teil (1.2.) der Einleitung schließt direkt an diese Problematik an. Darin wird ein gängiges Verständnis von Politik und politischer Literatur, das explizit an die Auseinandersetzung mit bestehenden politischen Systemen und Machtkämpfen gekoppelt ist, durch die poststrukturalistischen Arbeiten des französischen Philosophen Jacques Rancières sowie Grundannahmen afrokaribischer Vertreter der sogenannten Black Radical Tradition erweitert. In Kontrast zu traditionellen Politikdefinitionen ermöglichen diese Denkströmungen, Dimensionen politischen Handelns zu erfassen, die voranging in den Gebieten der Literatur und Kultur entwickelt werden. Im Zusammenhang mit der Diskussion dieser 'weiteren' Politikkonzeptionen wird der Vorschlag gemacht, Glissants eigenes Politikverständnis als eine Kombination dieser beiden Ansätze aufzufassen. Während Rancières Arbeit auf eine intrinsische politische Qualität von Literatur aufmerksam macht, bestehen Vertreter der Black Radical Tradition auf der Notwendigkeit, dass Kulturschaffende die diskursive oder darstellende Ebene ihrer Arbeit mit institutionellem Engagement zu ergänzen haben, um in neokolonialen Strukturen und Vorstellungen für Veränderungen sorgen zu können. Dieser Anspruch spiegelt sich ebenfalls in Glissants eigenem Denken und Handeln wider.

In einer umfassenden Auseinandersetzung mit der Sekundärliteratur, die sich mit der Frage

nach der politischen Dimension von Glissants Werk beschäftigt hat, zeigt der dritte Teil der Einleitung (1.3.), dass sich prominente Positionen in dieser Debatte vorwiegend auf gängige Politikverständnisse berufen, die also enger und systembezogener sind als jene, auf denen diese Recherche aufbaut. Konkret bedeutet dies, dass sowohl Positionen, die das politische Potential von Glissants Arbeit kritisch (Peter Hallward) als auch positiv bewerten (Celia Britton), das Politikverständnis, welches Glissants eigenem Ansatz zugrunde lag, weitestgehend unbeachtet lassen und an ihren eignen, teils nur angedeuteten, Verständnissen einer 'echten' Politik messen. Dadurch entstand nicht nur eine chronologische Aufteilung von Glissants politischem Handeln in ein frühes, militant-nationalistisch geprägtes politisches Engagement und ein spät, kulturell-universalistisch geprägtes Engagement, sondern ebenso eine Unterteilung von Aspekten, die in seinem Werk und Leben als politisch gelten, in Aktivismus, expliziten politischen Stellungnahmen und ästhetischen Aspekten, die politische Meinungen widerspiegeln. Vor dem Hintergrund der vorausgegangenen Konzeptualisierung des Politischen, sowie in Anbetracht dessen, dass Glissant für sich beanspruchte, ein holistisches Gesamtwerk entworfen zu haben, erscheint diese Unterteilung als ergänzungswürdig.

Der Rechercheansatz, der sich aus diesen Erkenntnissen ableitet und im letzten Teil der Einleitung dargelegt wird (1.4.), zeichnet sich dadurch aus, dass Glissants eigene Philosophie der Relation als theoretischer Forschungsrahmen herangezogen wird. Die Intention dahinter ist nicht nur dem Interesse zuzuschreiben, Glissants Arbeit mithilfe der Konzepte seiner Philosophie besser verstehen und beschreiben zu können – ein Ansatz, der zudem in einem Vorwort zu meta-methodologischen Vorüberlegungen dargelegt wird, die sich mit kartografischen Ansätzen befassen –, sondern darüberhinaus zu erforschen, welche Dimensionen politischen Handelns sichtbar werden, wenn sein Werk 'relational' oder transzendental gelesen wird, also über die von der Sekundärliteratur herangezogenen Kategorisierungen hinaus.

Im Rahmen der Vorstellung zentraler Konzepte von Glissants Philosophie wird dabei bereits der Versuch unternommen, aufgrund von Glissants eigenen Äußerungen über die Politik der Relation und das Politische ein Verständnis darüber zu erlangen, welche konzeptionelle Rolle Glissant politischem Handeln in seinem Gesamtwerk zugeschrieben hat. Dadurch wird nicht nur deutlich, dass Glissant einer Politik, die den normativen Ansprüchen seiner Philosophie entspricht, eine zentrale und gleichwertige Bedeutung zu literarischer Arbeit beimaß, sondern auch in welcher Konstellation sich diese Form politischen Handelns zu Fragen der Identität, der Wissensproduktion und 'relationalen' Weltvorstellungen befindet. Damit wird bereits im einführenden Kapitel mit der Beantwortung der Frage begonnen, was unter Glissants Politik der Relation verstanden werden kann. Die Forschung beschränkt sich zu diesem Punkt noch auf Glissants eigene explizite

Äußerungen zu dem Thema und lässt dadurch ein Verständnis der Politik der Relation als einem normativ-analytischen Konzept entstehen, das insbesondere an das Handeln staatlicher Akteure angelegt werden kann, um zu bemessen, zu welchem Grad sie darum bemüht sind, historische und kulturelle Verbindungen innerhalb und zwischen politischen Kollektiven, sowie mit deren Umwelt entstehen zu lassen. Vor dem Hintergrund des weiteren Politikverständnisses, das unter 1.2. erörtert wurde, wird dieser klassische politikwissenschaftliche Analyseansatz erweitert, in dem Glissants eigenes Werk durch das Konzept der Politik der Relation analysiert wird.

Um dieses Vorgehen verfolgen zu können, wird Glissants Werk nicht durch die gängige Unterteilung von Literatur, Theorie und Aktivismus analysiert, sondern als mehrdimensionales politisches Archiv konzeptualisiert, das aus vier, eng miteinander verwobenen Praktiken besteht: Fiktion (i), selbstreferenzielles und selbstdarstellerisches Schreiben und Handeln (Life-Writing, Performance) (ii), institutionelle Interventionen (iii) und abstraktes politisches Denken (iv). Als Konzept, das es ermöglicht, diese verschiedenen Dimensionen von Glissants eigener politischer Praxis durch sein Gesamtwerk hindurch zu lesen, schlägt der abschließende Teil der Einleitung den Begriff der 'intellektuellen Marronage' vor, ein Konzept das auf historische Befreiungsbewegungen von Sklaven in der Karibik und dem amerikanischen Kontinent Bezug nimmt. Als politiktheoretische Figur ist für die Bewegung der Marronage kennzeichnend, dass sie den Versuch unternimmt, außerhalb des etablierten Systems der Sklavenplantage Rückzugsorte und alternative Formen der Gemeinschaften entstehen zu lassen. Die Grundannahme der abstrakten Verwendung des Marronage-Begriffs in diesem Kontext ist, dass Marronage als eine tiefgreifende politische Tradition verstanden werden kann, die sich mit Formen der Flucht aus von Kapitalismus, Rassismus und Sexismus gekennzeichneten Unterdrückungsverhältnissen auseinandersetzt, und zugleich Strategien entwickelt, um gegen sie Widerstand zu leisten.

Die Struktur der drei folgenden Analysekapitel (2, 3 und 4) greift das Motiv der Marronage auf, indem in ihnen jeweils eine politische Strategie in Glissants Werk als metaphorische Marronage-Bewegung nachgezeichnet wird. Kapitel 2 befasst sich in diesem Sinne mit einer Bewegung in die Vergangenheit als einem zentralen Thema in Glissants Werk. Dass es sich hierbei nicht um eine Form der Nostalgie oder Realitätsflucht handelt, wird zu Beginn des Kapitels deutlich. Durch eine Auseinandersetzung mit Glissants Vorstellung der politischen Bedeutung von Gründungsmythen (*mythes fondateurs*) und epischen Erzählungen wird erarbeitet, dass die Arbeit mit Geschichte für Glissant zugleich der Versuch gewesen ist, neue diskursive Grundlagen für alternative Formen von Gemeinschaften zu legen. Als Antwort auf die neokoloniale Politik Frankreichs, das in Überseedepartments wie Martinique Geschichtsschreibung über die Sklaverei und dem Phänomen der Marronage, sowie kulturelle Verbindungen zwischen karibischen Inseln

und dem afrikanischen Kontinent systematisch unterband, verfasste Glissant in seinem fiktionalen und essayistischen Werk Gegendiskurse gegen die koloniale Geschichtsschreibung. Wie in diesem Zusammenhang gezeigt werden kann, revidiert Glissant damit nicht nur die Relativierung der politischen Bedeutung von Marronage, sondern postuliert den Marron darüberhinaus als Heldenfigur, an der sich ein relationales politisches Projekt orientieren könnte, das unter anderem das Ziel zu verfolgen hätte, die unterbundenen Verbindungen zwischen karibischen Gesellschaften in einem föderalistischen Staatensystem zu vereinen. Dem alternativen Geschichtsverständnis Glissants, das im zweiten Teil des Kapitels mit dem Begriff der '*prophetic vision of the past*' (prophetische Vergangenheitsvision) beschrieben wird, liegt somit ebenso ein abstraktes Verständnis von Marronage als einer politischen Tradition zugrunde, die nach dem Ende der Sklaverei unter anderem in den Arbeiten karibischer Intellektueller und Schriftsteller weiterlebt. Während sich die ersten beiden Teile dieses Kapitels vordergründig mit Glissants Geschichtsphilosophie befassen, die sich aus Glissants fiktionalem Werk und dem Essayband *Le discours antillais* (1981) ergibt, befasst sich der dritte Teil (2.3.) mit der Frage auseinander, inwieweit Glissants Selbstdarstellung und institutionelle Interventionen als Strategien verstanden werden können, durch die er seine Arbeiten zur politischen Bedeutung von Geschichte einem größeren Publikum gegenüber zugänglich machen konnte. Durch den Begriff der Performance wird in diesem Zusammenhang aufgezeigt, inwieweit Glissant in ausgewählten Momenten seiner Karriere im Rahmen öffentlicher und stark mediatisierter Auftritte selbst eine Marron-Figur verkörperte und damit die Grenze zwischen Fiktion und Realität, zwischen diskursiver und nicht-diskursiver politischer Praxis wiederholt verschwimmen ließ. Diese formalen Grenzüberschreitungen können dadurch für Glissants Politik der Relation als bedeutsam identifiziert werden.

In Kapitel 3 wird unter dem Titel einer 'Marronage in die Welt' eine weitere Bewegung beschrieben, die für Glissants persönliche politische Praxis grundlegend ist, nämlich deren konstante Bezugnahme auf eine Vorstellung der Welt, die Glissant mit dem Begriff der All-Welt (*Tout-Monde*) beschrieb. Kennzeichnend für diese Vision ist, dass die All-Welt laut Glissant aus einer Gesamtheit an kulturellen Differenzen, unvorhersehbaren Vermischungen und Veränderungen besteht, die man unmöglich in ihrer Totalität erfassen kann. Der Anspruch des Dichters in seinem Werk ist es dennoch, den Versuch zu unternehmen, sich diese Verschiedenheiten zu vergegenwärtigen, in ihrer Anwesenheit zu arbeiten und politische Interventionen stets mit dem Blick auf dieses globale Panorama hin auszurichten. Entgegen der Annahme, dass sich Glissants Werk von lokalen und nationalistisch geprägtem Engagement hin zu universellen Themen entwickelt hat, zeichnet dieses Kapitel zu Beginn diese 'weltliche' Richtung in *Le quatrième siècle*

(1964) und Ormerod (2003) nach, zwei fiktionalen Texten Glissants. Dabei wird deutlich, dass Glissant sowohl auf inhaltlicher wie auf formaler Ebene in seiner literarischen Arbeit darum bemüht war, Fluchtlinie aufzuzeigen, die aus der Gefangenschaft der Sklavenplantage, den Verstecken der Marrons und der manichäischen Kolonialwelt der karibischen Inseln zu einer Perspektive führten, durch die die Totalität der All-Welt sichtbar und erfahrbar werden würde. Der zweite Teil des Kapitels konkretisiert die analytische Richtung und zeigt dabei erneut auf, wie Glissant seine abstrakten politischen Überzeugungen und Text-basierte Arbeit mit institutionellen Interventionen verwoben hat. Anhand der symbolischen Bedeutung und des Werdegangs des fiktiven Charakters Mycéa kann in diesem Zusammenhang gezeigt werden, wie Glissant ein ökologisches Projekt, durch das er Martinique im Jahr 2000 in ein 'biologisches Land der Welt' (*Pays biologique du monde*) transformieren wollte, in sein fiktionales und essayistisches Werk eingeschrieben hat. Durch diese Übertragung wird das Potential des Projekts, das in seinem unmittelbaren nationalpolitischen Kontext scheiterte, bewahrt, um in einem anderen Rahmen und in einer anderen Zeit indirekte politische Auswirkungen haben zu können. Die Bedeutung einer Politik, die sich an der All-Welt orientiert, beziehungsweise von einer intellektuellen Marronage in die Welt geprägt ist, wird durch die Auseinandersetzung mit dieser Initiative besonders deutlich. Kennzeichnend ist für sie nicht nur ein Bewusstsein dafür, dass globale ökologische Probleme, wie Erderwärmung oder Meeresverschmutzung, global-politischer Antworten bedürfen, sondern insbesondere, dass ökologische Initiativen auf ganzheitliche Weise in ein Überdenken von ökonomischen, kulturellen und politischen Grundannahmen eingebunden werden müssen, damit sie im Rahmen einer politischen Gemeinschaft effektiv greifen können. Nachdem die Überschneidung zwischen fiktiven und nicht-fiktiven politischen Projekten in Glissants Werk anhand dieses Beispiels deutlich hervortritt, widmet sich der dritte Teil des Kapitels der Frage welche Bedeutung Glissant persönliche Bewegungen, Reisen und Positionierungen in der Welt für seine Politik der Relation zuzuschreiben ist. In seinen Essays unterteilte Glissant das politische Engagement mehrerer Generationen afrokaribischer Intellektueller und Politiker zwischen physischen und philosophischen Bewegungen, die sich mit Formen der Rückkehr (*Retour*) und der Umgehung (*Detour*) beschäftigen. In dem diese Konzepte auf Glissants eigenes Denken und Handeln angewendet werden, wird deutlich, dass seine Bewegungen zwischen Martinique, Frankreich und den USA weniger mit der Suche nach einer Heimat verbunden waren, als dass sich für Glissant an diesen Orten die Kräfte der Kreolisierung in besonders anschaulicher Weise nachzeichnen und beeinflussen ließen. Unter dem zentralen Begriff der Kreolisierung verstand Glissant sowohl einen welthistorischen als auch einen politisch progressiven kulturellen Wandlungsprozess, der durch das Vermischen von Kulturen und Weltvorstellungen (*imaginaires du monde*) gekennzeichnet ist.

Glissants eigenes Engagement wird in diesem Rahmen in zwei Schritten nachgezeichnet. Das Narrativ, das er über sein eigenes Leben in seinen Romanen, Essays und Interviews entstehen ließ, wird dabei als Gründungsepos für eine Pan-Karibische Gemeinschaft dargestellt. Diese diskursive Arbeit wird daraufhin mit der organisatorischen Arbeit verknüpft, die Glissant ab 1969 im Rahmen einer selbst gegründeten pädagogischen Einrichtung leistete, dem *Institut martiniquais d'études* (IME). Um zu belegen, dass die 'weltliche' Ausrichtung des IME im späteren Werk von Glissant um ein explizitere kosmopolitische Dimension ergänzt wurde, schließt sich an die Beschreibung von Glissants Arbeit als Direktor des IME eine Darstellung seiner Gründung des *Institut du Tout Monde* (ITM) 2006 an. Während das IME darauf zielte, einen stärkeren kulturellen Austausch innerhalb des karibischen Archipels und dem amerikanischen Kontinent entstehen zu lassen, wird durch den theoretischen Rahmen der Marronage in die Welt sichtbar, wie das ITM diese Praxis auf die All-Welt übertrug, deren Form Glissant ebenfalls als archipelagisch konzeptualisierte. Somit wird erneut deutlich, wie sich verschiedene Dimensionen von Glissants politischer Praxis miteinander verschränken und bestärken.

Kapitel 4 befasst sich mit verschiedenen gemeinschaftsbildenden Initiativen in Glissants Werk als einem wesentlichen Merkmal des Marronage-Konzepts und als zentral für seine persönliche Politik der Relation. In Abgrenzung zu modernen und postmodernen Vorstellungen der Gemeinschaft, beginnt dieses Kapitel mit, Glissants Interesse an Gemeinschaften vor dem Hintergrund afrokaribischer Problemstellungen um die Möglichkeiten von politischer Unabhängigkeit und Souveränität seit den dekolonialen Bewegungen der 1950er Jahren zu erörtern. Dabei wird deutlich, dass Glissant im Laufe seiner Karriere verschiedene Ansätze verfolgte, um angesichts der ungebrochenen Dominanz Frankreichs über Martinique und anderen Gesellschaften der Karibik politische Gemeinschaften entstehen zu lassen, die sich sowohl traditioneller politischer Konzepte (Nationalismus, Autonomie) wie auch alternativer Vorstellungen bedienten, die verstärkt darauf zielten die Potentiale von multiplen Gemeinschaftszugehörigkeiten und Interdependenzen auszuloten. Die konkreten Formen der fiktiven und realen Gemeinschaften, die durch Glissants Werk entstanden, werden in den folgenden drei Teilen des Kapitels deutlich. In ähnlicher Abfolge wie in den vorherigen Kapiteln, zeichnet die relationale Auseinandersetzung mit Glissants politischem Archiv in diesem Zusammenhang eine Bewegung nach, die von fiktionalen und stilistischen Überlegungen zu nicht-fiktivem und institutionellem Engagement übergeht, wobei die Grenzen zwischen diesen unterschiedlichen Modi politischer Praxis als durchlässig beschrieben werden. Im Rahmen des ersten Analyseteils, der sich damit auseinandersetzt, wie in Glissants fiktionalem Werk Gemeinschaftsvisionen entworfen werden, wird deswegen nicht nur der Konstellation zwischen Charakteren Bedeutung beigemessen, sondern insbesondere auch den

stilistischen Mitteln mithilfe derer Glissant Konzeptionen von Gemeinschaften entwarf, die insbesondere auch die Leser*innen seiner Texte inkludierte. Als wesentliche Merkmale dieser Gemeinschaften sind deren Offenheit, Inklusivität und Unbestimmtheit zu nennen. Letzterer Aspekt lässt die Frage danach, wer Teil der evozierten Gemeinschaften ist, wiederholt unbeantwortet, was insbesondere als Ablehnung von traditionellen, territorialen und biologischen Gemeinschaften hin zu einer Betonung der Bedeutung spiritueller Verbindungen sowie der Vision einer zukünftigen dekolonialen Gemeinschaft interpretiert wird, in der die kolonialen Identitäten zwischen Kolonialherr und Kolonialiserten, Weiss und Schwarz aufgehoben werden.

Wie Glissant diese Arbeit sowohl in seinem fiktionalem und essayistischen Werk konkretisierte, wird zunächst durch eine Interpretation von Glissants Gedichtsammlung der *Anthologie de la poésie du Tout-Monde* (2010) deutlich, in der Glissant eine Auswahl von Gedichten und Textfragmenten von Autor*innen präsentierte, deren Werk aus seiner Sicht von einer Sensibilität für die radikale Diversität der Welt geprägt ist. In dem Glissants Komposition der *Anthologie* mit gegenwärtigen Debatten um den Begriff der Weltliteratur in Bezug gesetzt wird, kann verdeutlicht werden, dass die diskursive Zusammensetzung von Dichtern aus der ganzen Welt nicht auf eine literaturwissenschaftliche Diskussion beschränkt war, sondern von Glissant als gemeinschaftsbildend aufgefasst wurde in dem Sinne, dass die in der *Anthologie* enthaltenen Autor*innen als spirituelle Vorfahren einer, noch im Entstehen begriffenen, Weltgemeinschaft verstanden werden können.

Anhand einer fiktiven Gemeinschaft, die Glissant in den Romanen *Sartorius* (1999) und *Ormerod* (2003) unter dem Namen der Batouto vorstellt, wird darüber hinaus gezeigt, dass die schwer fassbaren Zugehörigkeitskriterien, die die in der *Anthologie* aufgeführten Dichter und die fiktive Batouto-Gemeinschaft vereinen, sich auch im Rahmen von zwei weiteren institutionellen Engagements von Glissant nachzeichnen lassen, nämlich seiner Rolle als Chefredakteur des Kulturmagazins *UNESCO Kurier* und des *Internationalen Schriftstellerparlaments*. Insbesondere vor dem Hintergrund von Glissants Darstellung der Batouto, als einer über die Welt verstreuten Gemeinschaft von Individuen, die sich ihrer Zugehörigkeit zu einer Weltgemeinschaft selber nicht bewusst sind, aber eine Sensibilität für die Komplexität der All-Welt und unsichtbare Verbindungen teilen, die sie durchziehen, erscheint die Gemeinschaft der *UNESCO Kurier*-Leser*innen sowie der Schriftsteller*innen, die sich im Rahmen des *Schriftstellerparlaments* engagieren, als konkrete Beispiele für die Form Glissantischer 'Welt-Gemeinschaften'. In dem diese Gemeinschaften außerhalb von Glissants eigener Vorstellungswelt vorrangig in Netzwerken und losen Solidaritätsbewegungen auftreten, die sich unter, beziehungsweise über der Ebene des Nationalstaates bewegen, wird zudem deutlich, dass Glissants Politik der Relation nicht mit der

offiziellen Ebene der Politik konkurrierte oder sich von ihr lösen wollte, sondern strategische Verbindungen (*strategic entanglements*) mit ihr unterhielt.

Während Kapitel 2, 3 und 4 jeweils eine der Hauptbewegungen von Glissants intellektueller Marronage verfolgen, um dadurch ein umfangreiches Verständnis für die Politik der Relation entstehen zu lassen, wie sie in Glissants eigenem Werk enthalten ist, verfolgt das abschließende Kapitel 5 eine andere Analyserichtung. In dem es die theoretischen Implikationen von Glissants Konzeption und Praxis der Marronage-Bewegung befragt, wird Marronage in diesem abschließenden Analysekapitel deshalb als ein abstraktes politisches Modell aufgefasst, das mit anderen Konzepten und Debatten in der postkolonialen politischen Theorie in Verbindung gebracht werden kann. Die Hauptintention hinter dieser Arbeit ist darin begründet, Glissants Philosophie stärker mit bestehenden politischen Bewegungen und Theorien zu verknüpfen und dadurch den Eindruck, es handele sich bei Glissants politischer Praxis um ein singuläres Phänomen, zu entkräften. Im ersten Teil dieses Kapitels wird Glissants Marronage – durch die Kombination der Rechercheergebnisse der vorherigen Kapitel konzeptualisiert – mit politiktheoretischen Konzepten in Verbindung gebracht, die sich mit kollektiven und individuellen Fluchtbewegungen befassen, wie etwa die Konzepte des Exodus, der Fluchtlinie (Gilles Deleuze und Félix Guattari) und des strategischen Rückzugs (*temporary withdrawal*) (Isabel Lorey). Im Vergleich zu diesen Konzepten, die überwiegend in Auseinandersetzung mit den 'biopolitischen Systemen' (Michel Foucault) westlicher Industrienationen entworfen wurden, zeichnet sich Glissants Marronage dadurch aus, dass es die ontologischen und epistemologischen Grundannahmen politischer Systeme grundlegender hinterfragt und eine stärkere Betonung auf die Notwendigkeit legt, alternative Systeme zu ihnen zu entwerfen. Wie ein weiterer Vergleich mit Marronage-Konzeptionen, die in den disziplinären Rahmen der Africana Studies (Neil Roberts) und Black Studies (Fred Moten) entworfen wurden, offenlegt, ist eine von Besonderheit, nämlich Glissants politische Praxis in ihrer Verankerung in der Geschichte der Sklaverei und der Kolonisierung zu verorten. Die Erfahrung der systematischen Entmenschlichung durch den modernen Rassismus hat dazu geführt, dass Traditionen, die sich gegen dieses Projekt der europäischen Moderne richten, eng mit der Notwendigkeit verknüpft sind, einen alternativen Humanismus und eine neue Weltanschauung entstehen zu lassen.

Wie in den folgenden zwei Teilen (5.2. und 5.3.) demonstriert wird, lässt sich Glissants Philosophie nicht nur durch ihre Nähe zu anderen politiktheoretischen Konzeptionen der Flucht gewinnbringend im Feld der Politikwissenschaften einführen. Insbesondere im Themenfeld von Grenzen und Migration bietet Glissants Philosophie der Relation eine Reihe von Konzepten an, die es postkolonialen Forschungsansätzen einerseits ermöglichen, mit Glissants analytisch-normativen

Konzepten zu experimentieren, um bestehende politische Systeme auf deren 'Relationalität' oder 'Irrelationalität' hin zu prüfen. Andererseits bieten die Konzepte, die Glissant vorwiegend in seinen fiktionalen Arbeiten entworfen hat und die in Kapitel 4 unter anderem unter den Begriffen der 'kleinen Länder', Archipele und des Rechts auf Opazität im Rahmen von Glissants Gemeinschaftsvorstellungen vorgestellt werden, Anknüpfungspunkte für explorative Ansätze, die sich nicht am Imperativ der Praktikabilität oder Effizienz orientieren und daher neue Denkansätze präsentieren, die sich vor allem für politische Formen und deren kulturelle Einbettung interessieren.

Die Relevanz von Glissants politischem Denken im Kontext der politischen Theorie wird in einem letzten Teil damit belegt, dass der grundlegende demokratische Impuls, der sowohl seinen literarischen als auch organisatorischen Arbeiten innewohnt, mit zwei Traditionen in Verbindung gebracht wird, die sich explizit mit der Frage beschäftigen, wie postkoloniale Alternativen zu dem dominanten liberalen Demokratiemodell gefunden werden können. Wie der Vergleich mit Vertretern der radikalen demokratischen Theorie und afrikanischen demokratietheoretischen Debatten zeigt, bietet Glissants Ansatz auch hier produktive Anknüpfungspunkte, die nicht in die Richtung einer radikalen Andersartigkeit seines Werks zielen, sondern eher Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen Glissants Demokratiedenken und bestehenden Theorien hervorkehren, die in den überwiegend selbstreferenziellen Arbeiten Glissants nicht erkennbar sind. Anhand des Beispiels der Zapatista-Bewegung wird zudem aufgezeigt, in welchem empirischen Fall Glissants Demokratieverständnis anschaulich zutage tritt. Die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Politikverständnis der Zapatistas, einer sozialrevolutionären Bewegung im Süden Mexikos, ergänzt zudem den überwiegenden Fokus der Arbeit auf die Auseinandersetzung mit der politischen Arbeit von Dichtern und Denkern als konkreten Beispielen einer Politik der Relation.

Im Schlusskapitel werden die verschiedenen konzeptionellen Ebenen, die der Beschreibung von Glissants Politik der Relation zugrunde liegen, abschließend offen gelegt. Dabei wird das Argument verfolgt, dass sich die normativen und analytischen Dimensionen des Begriffs auch außerhalb von Glissants Werk für die Beschreibung bestimmter postkolonialer politischer Praktiken eignen, die einen ganzheitlichen Ansatz verfolgen, dessen verschiedene Charakteristika gesondert zusammengefasst werden. Als besonders produktiv wird dabei die Eigenschaft von Glissants 'relativistischem Universalismus' hervorgehoben, potentielle Verbindungen zwischen progressiven antirassistischen und antikapitalistischen politischen Bewegungen sichtbar werden zu lassen, die durch eine Überbewertung strategischer Differenzen leicht übersehen werden können. Dadurch, dass Glissants Politik der Relation eine Gegenüberstellung von politischen Kräften zugrunde liegt, die Diversität als positiv auffassen und jenen, die sie ablehnen, den sogenannten 'Kräften und Feinden des Lebendigen' (*forces and enemies of the living*), wird abschließend der Vorschlag

unterbreitet, die Politik der Relation nicht als anderen politischen Bewegungen überlegen sondern durch ihren Fokus auf den Bereich des Imaginären, als ergänzend aufzufassen.

II. Thesis Statement Summary

Thesis 1:

The political legacy of the Martinican poet, novelist and philosopher Édouard Glissant (1928–2011) is the subject of an ongoing debate among postcolonial literary scholars. A prominent consensus that emerged between advocates and critics of his work holds that his political practice can be differentiated between an 'early' and 'late' phase. This periodisation hinges on the publication of *Poétique de la Relation* in 1990 and is characterised by different degrees of political intensity, a shift from local to global concerns and an abandonment of militant nationalism towards the endorsement of cultural politics (Hallward/Britton). I argue that this division is based on a narrow conception of 'engaged political writing' tied to interventions in established political discourses, institutions and systems. This conception prevents a more comprehensive view of the changing political strategies Glissant pursued throughout his life to emerge. Against this background my dissertation is concerned with re-reading the dimensions of Glissant's work that have hitherto been relegated as apolitical, literary or poetic with the aim of conceptualising the 'politics of relation' as an integral part of his overall poetic project.

Thesis 2:

My dissertation proposes a relational reading of Glissant's complete works in order to provide a comprehensive study of Glissant's political legacy. This method comprises a transversal reading of Glissant across literary genres (essays, novels, theatre plays, poetry), epochs (early/late), as well as the conventional divisions between political thought, writing and activism. This perspective is informed by Glissant's philosophy of relation and draws on a conception of political practice that includes both explicit engagements with established political systems and institutions, as well as literary and cultural interventions geared towards their transformation and the creation of alternatives to them. Theoretically my work combines a poststructuralist lens on the conceptual difference between 'politics' and 'the political' (Marchart) with arguments for an inherent political quality of literature (Rancière) and perspectives from the Afro-Caribbean radical tradition, in which writers and intellectuals have historically sought to combine discursive interventions with organisational actions. Applying this theoretical angle to the analysis of Glissant's politics of relation results in an interdisciplinary research framework that explores the synergies between political and literary studies.

Thesis 3:

In order to comprehensively describe Glissant's politics of relation without recourse to evolutionary or digressive models, I argue that the concept of an intellectual marronage is best suited as a frame-

work to map the strategies making up the 'political archive' constructed by Glissant's life-work. The conception of marronage I employ draws from multiple sources: the historical phenomenon in the Americas, abstract conceptual usages circulating in American, Caribbean and Africana Studies, and lastly the conceptualisation emerging from Glissant's oeuvre. Marronage is thus understood as a mode of radical resistance to the neocolonial subjugation for which the plantation system stands historically and metaphorically, as an inherently innovative political practice invested in the creation of communities marked by relational ontologies, and a commitment to fostering an imagination of the world and the human that differs fundamentally from the Enlightenment paradigm. Employing this broad and yet specific conception of intellectual marronage allows me to identify three central strategies that consistently characterise Glissant's political practice. They revolve around an engagement with history (thesis 4), the fostering of an imagination of the Tout-Monde (thesis 5), and the exploration of alternative forms of community (thesis 6). Together these strategies constitute Glissant's personal politics of relation.

Thesis 4:

Depicting Glissant's life-long engagement with Caribbean history as a movement of marronage into time, I demonstrate that Glissant's response to colonial historiography was not limited to the depiction of the complex social entanglements of Caribbean societies from multiple perspectives. Employing his concepts of the 'founding myth' and the 'prophetic vision of the past', I argue that Glissant's practice of 'making history' was geared towards constructing an inclusive narrative that could serve as the foundation for alternative 'imagined communities' on local, regional and global levels. Pursuing this line of reading in novels like *Le quatrième siècle* (1963), the essay collection *Le discours antillais* (1981), and in the theatre play *Monsieur Toussaint* (1961), reveals Glissant's discursive approach to the analysis of political issues. This approach is defined by a sensitivity to whether the epics and myths providing political communities with a sense of cohesion are inclusive or averse to diversity. From a Glissantian angle, it is the responsibility of 'poets' to respond to such failures of relational imaginations as the 'root-causes' of socio-political problems. In addition to outlining the textual interventions Glissant launched against the background of this conceptualisation of the political importance of history, my study shows how he sought to bridge the division between textual and extra-textual political practices by, for example, publicly performing the figure of a maroon *quimboiseur* (wise-man, story-teller and healer) towards the end of his life, and being involved in the establishment of institutions geared towards the memorialisation of slavery and colonialism in France.

Thesis 5:

In contrast to the view that Glissant's political engagements can be differentiated between an early local preoccupation with Martinican nationalism towards an increasing orientation towards global concerns, my dissertation makes the case that a movement towards the world was a constant in Glissant's political practice. This worldly marronage is characterised by an escape from the confinement of the plantation, and the geographic limitations of the island, towards a vision of the radical multiplicity of civilisations arranged in the archipelagic form of the Tout-Monde. Revealing how Glissant continuously worked to open up alternative geographical and political horizons, I demonstrate how he employed the full scale of literary-political tools, ranging from fictional naming and referencing practices, shifts in narrative settings to the creation of educational institutions and the launching of political programs. This perspective brings to light a back-and-forth movement between different scales of political intervention. The fictional and non-fictional manifestations of his *Manifeste pour un projet global* (2000), in which Glissant formulated a program to transform Martinique into an example for a completely ecological economy. This serves to concretise what it means for the Tout-Monde to operate as a point of reference for Glissant's politics of relation, namely by reflecting the impact of global issues, such as nature deprivation, with an awareness of the unique potential of a specific place to enrich the diversity of the world.

Thesis 6:

Against the historic background of the transatlantic slave trade and the unbroken French neocolonial dominance in the Antilles, the 'problem of the community' has been identified as a central concern among Francophone Caribbean intellectuals. Responding to the question of how Glissant engaged with this problem I argue that Glissant's strategy of actively creating communities in the fictional and non-fictional realm forms a central part of his politics of relation framed as an intellectual marronage. My study reveals that his strategy of community creation operated on three levels simultaneously: the local level of the island and the nation-state, the regional level of the archipelago and the political federation, and the global level of the Tout-Monde. Paying particular attention to the latter, my research shows how Glissant constantly mixed textual and extra-textual political engagements as part of his commitment to imagine alternative 'world-communities'. In my reading, these Glissantian communities not only took the form of actual face-to-face communities of writers and readers generated by the institutions Glissant created or cooperated with. They also took the form of communities straddling the permeable borders of the fictional and non-fictional realm, such as the Batouto people which features in Glissant's novels *Sartorius* (1999) and *Ormerod* (2003). On conceptual grounds, these world-communities propose formal alternatives to

dominant forms of community such as the sovereign nation-state by sharing a commitment to openness and the fostering of relational identities.

Thesis 7:

I argue that bringing Glissant's personal political practice – as conceptualised by the three strategies outlined in theses 4, 5 and 6 – in conversation with debates in political theory allows for a more nuanced description of its defining characteristics than accorded by the general label of politically engaged writing or postcolonial resistance (Britton). I substantiate this claim by setting my conceptualisation of Glissant's intellectual marronage in conversation with three political theoretical debates. The first deals with movements of flight out of systems of neoliberal governance, as well as conceptualisations of marronage as collective modes of flight away from systematic anti-black violence towards zones of freedom (Roberts) and as strategies of subversive cultural practices (Moten). The second engages with postcolonial perspectives on contemporary debates on borders and migration, and the third with discussions pertaining to the internal configurations of political communities in liberal democracies. By critically discussing Glissant's intellectual marronage in each of these political theoretical debates, I show that a specificity of his politics of relation is its strong dedication to creativity and formal experimentation, which I exemplify with regards to his concepts of the 'small country' and 'the archipelago'. On an epistemological plane, I furthermore make the case that Glissant performs a line of flight out of the Western political tradition towards the exploration of alternative theoretical archives, such as the African democratic tradition (Mbembe), and invites the consideration of the epistemological 'pluriversality' fostered by the Zapatista movement (Drabinski), which I propose to frame as a concrete manifestation of a politics of relation.

Thesis 8:

Taking the three main strategies as well as the abstract theoretical characteristics outlined in thesis 7 into account, my study claims that the different modes or genres of political action Glissant employed is marked by a certain regularity. I argue that this pattern can be discerned both in the way Glissant shifted from more opaque engagements with smaller audiences to more accessible and widely publicised positions, as well as between practices that are concerned with effecting change in the present moment or the more than 500 year long timeframe shaping Glissant's vision of the *Tout-Monde*. In cases where Glissant endorsed more widely visible modes of expression I argue that they corresponded to particular political moments that concerned the question of the communities that Glissant considered himself to belong to. For Glissant, these communities are not

only to be understood in a literal sense of his place of origin (Martinique) or nationality (France), but more broadly as 'problem-spaces' (Scott) which he deemed to be of importance for the world-historic process of creolisation. Considering these changes to be operating on a conceptual continuum along the two axis of visibility and time, I suggest that large parts of his political practice risk remaining invisible when they are judged in narrow time-frames and according to conventional understandings of success, impact or efficacy. Placing his political interventions in the framework of a longer temporality reveals how Glissant employed a mix of different genres and media to re-inscribe traces of the strategies he pursued into a political archive that allows future generations to draw on them.

Thesis 9:

Against a prevalent view that deems Glissant's concept of creolisation and his problematisation of conceptual binaries as incompatible with the need to formulate effective decolonial strategies of resistance, I argue that his politics of relation must not be confused with a *laissez-faire* approach. By identifying the conflict between what Glissant called the 'forces' and 'enemies of the living' (political actors that can accept and value or who reject and seek to destroy differences and cross-cultural mixing) as the 'hard political line' underlying Glissant's philosophy of relation, I frame Glissant's politics as a 'relativist-universalism', that makes respect for cultural relativism the very basis of a universal normative claim. This also means that what counted most for Glissant was the imaginary underpinning specific political movements. An awareness of this dissociative trait of his politics can serve as a productive basis on which it can be brought in conversation with related political struggles against structural discriminations based on singular or intersectional political identities.

Thesis 10:

In disciplinary terms, my study makes the case that an engagement with Glissant's politics of relation can serve as an example to foster interdisciplinary modes of research across the divisions of postcolonial literary and political studies. Engaging with classical political concerns as well as with the creative powers of literary works, my work on Glissant's politics of relation invites literary studies to pay attention to areas where literary works or authors deliberately branch out into the non-textual dimension. My dissertation therefore also makes the case to perceive the politics of relation as a specific kind of wholistic postcolonial practice that is committed to exploring the full range of political practices, without divorcing or devaluating the more subtle from the more obvious components. In the realm of political studies, my thesis advances the argument that the realms of

literature and poetry need to be taken seriously as primary archives and spaces of experimentation, in which writers and poets like Glissant pursue the stated ambition to think outside established epistemological and conceptual confines and to invent alternative forms for political communities. Interrogating the political implications of these strategies with political theoretical conceptual vocabulary can contribute towards fostering alternative modes of resistance against the capitalist, racist and patriarchic modes of domination inherited from the Eurocentric civilisational paradigm (de Sousa Santos).

Statement of Authorship / Selbständigkeitserklärung

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this doctoral thesis and that I have not used any sources other than those listed in the bibliography and identified as references. I further declare that I have not submitted this thesis at any other institution in order to obtain a degree.

Ich versichere, dass ich die von mir vorgelegte Arbeit selbständig verfasste wurde und bei der Abfassung nur die in der Dissertation angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt sowie alle wörtlich oder inhaltlich übernommenen Stellen als solche gekennzeichnet wurden.

June 12, 2020

Date of submission / *Datum der Einreichung*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Manz', written over a horizontal line.

Signature / *Unterschrift*