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## **'We Were All Strangers Here': Time, Space, and Postcolonial Anxiety in Traversay's *Les Amours de Zémédare et Carina*, et description de l'île de la Martinique**

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**‘We Were all Strangers Here’. Time, Space and Postcolonial Anxiety in Traversay’s  
*Les Amours de Zémédare et Carina, et description de l’île de la Martinique***

**Abstract**

A sense of dislocation, unsettlement and exile — what Naipaul calls the ‘enigma of arrival’ — was the destiny of all who migrated to the Antilles under the plantation regime, although this enigma was experienced in radically different ways by masters and slaves. While much scholarship exists on how ‘Black’ writers engaged with space and time in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, earlier Antillean writers have generally not been interrogated in terms of their exploration of the chronotopes of island and plantation. For these writers, fiction was a medium through which to explore and accentuate the exotic: nineteenth-century novels routinely present idealized, mysterious, magical or forbidding landscapes. Fiction also provided a powerful vehicle for domesticating the alien, through a pronounced recourse to (apparently) objective detail and quantifiable data. This article examines the first known, and almost entirely neglected, Martinican novel, Traversay’s *Les Amours de Zémédare et Carina*, a novel that exemplifies this tension between the urge to make strange and the urge to chart, define and explain. In its treatment of time — in particular its use of prolepsis — and in the presentation of space — gardens, trees, geological formations — the novel exemplifies the ambivalence and anxiety so commonly identified with more recent postcolonial writing.

Imperialism is after all an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted and finally brought under control.<sup>1</sup>

The migratory West Indian feels rootless on his own earth, chafing at its beaches.<sup>2</sup>

In a meditation on the peculiar status of the modern Caribbean population, Derek Walcott declared that ‘we were all strangers here’.<sup>3</sup> In thus describing the condition of all (postcolonial) Antilleans — master, slave, indentured labourer and, in the immediate context of his essay, Saint-John Perse and Walcott himself —, the Saint-Lucian poet suggests that a sense of dislocation or alienation is the common experience of all who have migrated, or been transplanted, to the islands, and therefore that ‘home’ is a concept fraught with an especially profound sense of loss, lack, and longing. The experiences of transplantation, deterritorialization and exile worked themselves out, of course, in radically different

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> Derek Walcott, ‘What the Twilight Says: An Overture’, in *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays* (New York: Farrar Strauss and Giroux, 1970), pp. 1–40, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Derek Walcott, *What the Twilight Says. Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), p.10. Walcott’s formulation might be seen to privilege the postcolonial condition over the experience of native peoples.

conditions for master and slave in the Caribbean. But the collective experience is inflected by the fact that the ‘colonized’ of the Caribbean are no more indigenous than the colonizers. Walcott affords a limited priority to the master (‘the soil was stranger under our feet than under those of our captor [...] theirs were the names we used’).<sup>4</sup> But such an attenuated anteriority does not invalidate what V.S. Naipaul calls the ‘enigma of arrival’,<sup>5</sup> which was the experience of all Antilleans in the wake of slavery. Much has been written on how the cultural production of ‘Black’ Antilleans in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries exhibits a ‘highly charged relation to time and space’.<sup>6</sup> However, and in keeping with a widespread neglect of early Antillean literature,<sup>7</sup> writing from earlier centuries has generally not been

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> *The Enigma of Arrival* is the title of a 1987 novel by Naipaul.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Gallagher, *Soundings in French Caribbean Writing since 1950. The Shock of Space and Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 1. Other critical works privileging time and/or space include *Ici-là. Place and Displacement in Caribbean Writing in French*, ed. by Mary Gallagher (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2003); Nick Nesbitt, *Voicing Memory. Literature and Subjectivity in French Caribbean Literature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003); Lorna Milne, *Patrick Chamoiseau. Espaces d’une écriture antillaise* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006); Catherine Reinhardt, *Claims to Memory. Beyond Slavery and Emancipation in the French Caribbean* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2006); and Maeve McCusker, *Patrick Chamoiseau: Recovering Memory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> To date, the analysis of nineteenth-century white Creole writing tends towards taxonomy or broad historical survey. Examples include Régis Antoine’s books *Les Écrivains français et les Antilles: des premiers pères blancs aux surréalistes noirs* (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et

interrogated with a view to understanding how the chronotopes of the island and the plantation are imagined by the earliest white Creole writers,<sup>8</sup> writers whose relationship with space and time is also a charged, and at times tortured, one.

Initially, of course, it was the prerogative of the planter to explore this chronotope through literature. Yet, as Jack Corzani has argued, the earliest writings to emerge in the colonies in the eighteenth century, almost exclusively in verse, were strikingly disconnected from island space. Rather, '[i]ndifference to local conditions characterizes almost all the poetry produced by white Creoles during the entire eighteenth century. Their poetry is mostly linked to emigration'.<sup>9</sup> It was only with the dawn of the nineteenth century that narrative

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Larose, 1978), and *La Littérature franco-antillaise. Haïti, Guadeloupe et Martinique* (Paris: Karthala, 1992). This survey-style approach is shared even by ostensibly thematic studies: Léon-François Hoffman, *Le Nègre romantique. Personnage littéraire et obsession collective* (Paris: Payot, 1973); Chantal Maignan-Claverie, *Le Métissage dans la littérature des Antilles françaises: le complexe d'Ariel* (Paris: Karthala, 2005). While these works are invaluable in their diachronic span and breadth of reference, none approaches their corpus from a 'textualist' perspective.

<sup>8</sup> I use the term 'white Creole' in preference to *béké* in this article, because the term is used by Traversay, along with *habitant*. Louis de Maynard's 1835 novel *Outre-mer* is the first to use the word *béké*.

<sup>9</sup> Jack Corzani, 'Poetry before Negritude', in *A History of Literature in the Caribbean*, ed. by A. James Arnold, Julio Rodriguez-Luis and J. Michael Dash, 3 vols (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins), I, pp. 465–77, p. 466.

fiction emerged as a (barely) acceptable form.<sup>10</sup> Early Creole novelists wrote melodramatic, sentimental, gothic, and often credibility-stretching tales that nevertheless included attempts to catalogue, triangulate, record, and give the appearance of scientific objectivity to elements of their natural environment. Their generically hybrid texts — literary patchworks, integrating travel writing, natural history, social geography, medicine, zoology, as well as fragments of other literary texts — *appear* to conform to what Said describes as the imperial aspiration to explore, chart and control unruly and unknown spaces. Yet it is important to remember the profound ‘unknown-ness’ of these *vieilles colonies*, colonized some two hundred years before the Age of Empire. As David Lambert has observed, the Caribbean in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was ‘located “beyond the line” of European geopolitical certainties’.<sup>11</sup> White Creoles were at once writing ‘back to the centre’, France (often accentuating the otherness of an idealized and exoticized natural environment in recognizably *doudouist* narratives), but also attempting to inscribe themselves with some ontological certainty in the islands. Fiction was often an attempt to domesticate the alien, as though owning could be bolstered through knowing, and apparently factual, objective and quantifiable data could confer geographical, historical, and existential stability.

This article proposes a reading of a novel that exemplifies the tension, in early Creole writing, between the urge to contain and domesticate space and time, often by analogy with French history and geography, and the sense of the fragility and insecurity of tenure. The text

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<sup>10</sup> Many prefaces reflect explicitly on the new genre, often comparing it unfavourably with poetry. See for example Maynard’s *Outre-mer* (1835) and Louis-Xavier Eyma’s *Emmanuel* (1841).

<sup>11</sup> David Lambert, *White Creole Culture. Politics and Identity during the Age of Abolition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 3.

in question is the first, and almost entirely neglected,<sup>12</sup> Antillean novel, *Les Amours de Zémédare et Carina, et description de l'île de la Martinique* (1806),<sup>13</sup> by Auguste Prévost de Sansac de Traversay,<sup>14</sup> which deals in detail with the early plantation chronotope. The title itself suggests a topographical ambition reflected in the novel's surfeit of geographical, topographical, botanical and climatic material. Corzani argues that these devices, common in planter writing of the period, reflect a 'love for the native land', and 'the need to preserve it and to keep control over it'.<sup>15</sup> I will argue rather that such strategies testify to insecurity of

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<sup>12</sup> In addition to passing references in the studies mentioned in note 7, until very recently the only in-depth analysis of the novel is in Chapter Two of Jacqueline Couti's recent monograph *Dangerous Creole Liaisons* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016). As this article went to press (June 2017), Couti's scholarly edition of the novel appeared in L'Harmattan's 'Autrement mêmes' series, under the general editorship of Roger Little.

<sup>13</sup> Auguste-Jean Prévost de Sansac, comte de Traversay, *Les Amours de Zémédare et Carina et description de l'île de la Martinique* (Paris: Giguet et Michaud, 1806). The novel was re-published in the series 'Romans antillais du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle', edited by Auguste Joyau (Morne Rouge [Martinique]: Éditions des Horizons caraïbes, 1977). All references are to this edition of the novel, and will be in parentheses.

<sup>14</sup> Traversay, from a plantation-owning family, was born in Rochefort in 1762, died in Poitiers in 1849, and spent substantial periods of time in Martinique. See the genealogical site: <http://gw.geneanet.org/lrudeau?n=prevost+de+sansac+de+traversay&oc=&p=auguste+jean> [Consulted 2 March 2016], and Madeleine du Chatenet's biography of Auguste-Jean's brother, *Traversay: un Français ministre de la marine des Tsars* (Paris: Tallandier, 1996), which provides useful background.

<sup>15</sup> Corzani, 'Poetry before Negritude', p. 468.

ownership. The extensive lists of flora and fauna, and the detailed geographical co-ordinates and topographical features which run through these texts, indicate not *topophilia* — a term coined by the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan to describe ‘the fondness for place because it is familiar, because it is home and incarnates the past, because it provides pride of ownership and creation’<sup>16</sup> — but neurosis deriving from the spatial and temporal insecurity of the slave-owning class. In terms of the epigraphs with which this article begins, the writings of white Creoles resonate more strongly with Walcott’s rootless West Indian, ‘chafing at the beaches’ of the Antilles, than with Said’s colonial subject whose efforts at knowing derive from a sovereign supremacy. The white Creole’s glorious colonial stability was of course more apparent than real, and these writings testify therefore to nostalgia for a home/land recently acquired, only partially known and in many respects still alien, and yet already obsolete.

None of these early works can be read as ‘resistant’ in any straightforward postcolonial way. In Traversay’s forgotten novel, however, the insistent evocations of the excellence of the *colon* caste and the superiority of plantation slavery over other forms of social organisation seem not so much to reject such postcolonial tropes as hybridity, in-betweenness and the contact zone, as to propose a world in which such positions are unthinkable. Why, then, should the text warrant the attention of the modern reader, beyond the urge to round out a comprehensive literary genealogy, or to ‘begin at the beginning’ of an Antillean fictional tradition which now holds such a spectacularly privileged position not just in francophone, but also in world literature? What reading strategies might the contemporary reader deploy when faced with a novel whose ‘black and white’ colonial certainties appear resolutely intact? In defending the excavation of a novel such as Traversay’s, I would argue

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<sup>16</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia. A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (New Jersey and London: Prentice Hall, 1974), p. 247.



that a close reading of early Creole novels, against their own rhetorical and diegetic grain, reveals the prevalence of those most postcolonial preoccupations: a sharp anxiety in space and time, an ambivalence towards the self, and above all a sense of the ephemerality of ownership. To this extent, and even though planter identity appears on the face of it to be less besieged than enshrined, the novel can indeed be considered to exemplify what Toumson calls ‘le complexe obsidional des colons’.<sup>17</sup>

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The novel’s two-pronged title suggests that the love story of the eponymous couple and the geographical description of the island — romance plot and topographical plotting — are of comparable, if not equal, weight. In keeping with the sustained attempt to classify, order and hierarchize that runs through the novel,<sup>18</sup> Traversay indicates in his Preface that he has, on the advice of an anonymous *homme de lettres*, divided the novel into discrete chapters, allowing the reader, ‘selon les dispositions de son esprit ou de son cœur’, to choose between descriptions of the colony and the love story. The novel’s project — to ‘faire connaître la colonie de la Martinique et de faire aimer les deux amants que je célèbre’ (p. 48) — is both pedagogical and sentimental. And yet it is the fictional story of the protagonists, which runs from the 1740s to approximately the 1770s, that carries most weight. Carina, the beautiful and virtuous only daughter of M. and Mme Sainprale, is destined to marry her cousin Zémédare (whose heroism and good judgement are established early in the novel when he

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<sup>17</sup> Roger Toumson, *La Transgression des couleurs: littérature et langage des Antilles, XVIII<sup>e</sup>, XIX<sup>e</sup>, XX<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris: Éditions Caribéennes, 1989), p. 171.

<sup>18</sup> The novel includes, for example, a taxonomy of African tribes (p. 62), and an extended exposé of how different physiognomic types determine character and personality (pp. 101–03).

helps quash an English invasion in 1758).<sup>19</sup> On her mother's death, however, Carina begins to embrace worldly pleasures and, under the influence of a malevolent lady-in-waiting, falls in love with and agrees to marry the libertine Mélidore, nephew of the French Minister for War. Zémédare, broken-hearted, travels to Brittany to stay with an uncle. Meanwhile, Mélidore is posted to France, and Carina and her father decide to accompany him there. During the voyage his dastardly character becomes evident to all, and he dies of a 'maladie honteuse' which develops into smallpox. When the ship washes up in Brittany during a storm, Zémédare happens upon the wreckage, and rescues Carina and her dying father. Carina retires to a convent, but is eventually won over by Zémédare. The couple marry and have several children in France, before making a triumphant return to Martinique. The novel ends with their death, but continuity is assured by the marriage of one of their children.

Traversay acknowledges in his Preface that his story may or may not be true; but he claims that his first-hand experience of the colonies confers a literary and ideological advantage over his model, 'l'élégant auteur de *Paul et Virginie*': 'connaissant mieux le pays

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<sup>19</sup> Couti, drawing on Du Chatenet's biography, discusses Traversay's own naval background (*Dangerous Creole Liaisons*, p. 33); see also Du Chatenet, *Traversay*, p. 168. As in other early Creole novels, the English are treated with suspicion if not outright hostility. See the essay 'Sur l'amour de la patrie et la prétendue anglomanie des habitants de la Martinique', included in the first edition of *Les Amours*, Vol 2, pp. 248-54, where the author acknowledges that it is thanks to the English that men and property were saved during the French Revolution, but insists that Martinique's planters wish to remain under French rule. The essay, along with a heterogeneous array of historical notes, lists, chronologies etc, were included in the original edition, excluded from Joyau's 1977 edition, and reinstated by Couti in her 2017 edition.

qu'il décrit, ses tableaux doivent être plus multipliés et encore plus ressemblants'. This means that 'l'esclavage des nègres et [leur] affranchissement' are presented in this novel, for the first time, 'sous leur vrai point de vue' (p. 17). It is a self-conscious, and self-confident, statement of purpose. Not only does the author speak with insider authority — the first of several jibes at Bernardin de Saint-Pierre — he also heralds his fictional debut as an exercise in telling the truth about slavery. And yet what is most striking about the treatment of slavery in *Les Amours* is the extent to which it is marginalized, or euphemistically displaced. Slaves are systematically segregated (structurally and diegetically), domesticated, and frequently invisible; their contact with white Creoles is minimal. The infant Carina is breast-fed by her mother rather than by a *da*, a domestic slave (p. 26),<sup>20</sup> and slaves are forbidden to 'parler nègre devant elle' to prevent linguistic contamination (p. 29). In a scene notably devoid of enslaved black bodies, a young Carina is shown around the factory, 'pour lui apprendre comment on fabriquait le sucre' — the impersonal pronoun 'on' further obscuring the conditions of production (p. 31). Planters are euphemistically described as 'cultivateurs' (p. 35), their slaves are 'soumis et tranquilles et travaillant avec zèle et plaisir' (p. 59), and the plantation is consistently figured as a benign space in which pregnant women are protected from hard labour, children are required to work only from the ages of twelve, fifteen or later, and the sick are cared for at the master's expense. More generally, the text rehearses arguments that slavery's antiquity justified its contemporary use, and repeats too the common claim that Caribbean slaves were happier than warring Africans, and more content than famished labourers and serfs in Europe (p. 60, p. 83). The only episode of slave resistance is a poisoning campaign directed by a slave overseer, Artaban. It occurs not on the

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<sup>20</sup> This contrasts with later novels such as *Outre-mer* and *Les Créoles*, which feature (slave) nurses whose interracial intimacy compromised the family, and the plantocracy.

Sainprale plantation but on that of a neighbouring widow, Mme Flaméau, and is rendered outlandish by the excessive evil of the perpetrators: Artaban and his wife are so sadistic that they kill their own four youngest children (p. 56). The novel's (token) *homme de couleur*, Eugène Dérima, is a passionate advocate for the continuation of slavery, rather than an agent of its destruction; his wife, Zoé, a *métisse*, rejected the marriage proposal of a French merchant in the interests of racial decorum, thereby protecting the white male from what she calls his 'projets honteux' (p. 83). Both episodes — concerning the repugnant Artaban and the hyper-assimilated Dérima couple — are contained within a single discrete chapter each, and have minimal repercussions for the rest of the novel.

As is clear from the above, and unlike subsequent Creole novels of the nineteenth century, *Les Amours* does not revolve around the threat of collapsing racial identity, incestuous desire or thwarted maternity; it does not culminate in the kind of apocalyptic ending common in later novels, which tend to figure the plantation as a literal and metaphorical dead end. The institution of slavery is presented with a notable lack of ambivalence, and with a confidence no longer available, perhaps, to such writers as Levilloux or Maynard, who were writing in the wake of English, and on the cusp of French, abolition.<sup>21</sup> Auguste Joyau is surely right to claim that Traversay 'considérait aussi bien l'esclavage que le préjugé de couleur comme un état de fait dont *il n'était même pas question de contester le*

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<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of the historical angst which affected both writers, see Maeve McCusker, 'Figuring Abjection. The Slave Mother in the early Creole Novel', *French Studies*, 67.1 (2013), 61–75.

fondement'.<sup>22</sup> The narrative's (apparent) lack of ideological tension, ambivalence and complexity perhaps explains why, despite the text's inaugural status within the French Caribbean tradition and its relatively easy availability,<sup>23</sup> *Les Amours* has been afforded little more than a name check by successive critics. For Léon-François Hoffmann, the novel is typical of contemporary colonial melodramas such as those by Hugo and Piquenard, works which claim to 'dramatiser l'Histoire', but which in fact 'illustrent plutôt la partialité des écrivains'.<sup>24</sup> Corzani reads the novel alongside other early Antillean novels that share its 'médiocrité littéraire'; while they are often heirs to the gothic romance, Traversay's novel is a descendant of the 'courant "sensible" et mièvre du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle'.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> 'Introduction' to *Les Créoles ou la vie aux Antilles*, 'Romans antillais du XIX siècle', edited with Introduction by Auguste Joyau (Morne Rouge, Martinique: Éditions des Horizons caraïbes, 1977), pp. 9–11, p. 9, my italics.

<sup>23</sup> Thanks to Joyau's 1977 edition it was more readily available than, for example, *Outre-mer*, only re-edited in a 2008 critical edition by Maeve McCusker (in L'Harmattan's 'Autrement mêmes' series, dir. by Roger Little), and yet already the subject of close critical commentary. See Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles. The Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 290–316. The recent 'Autrement mêmes' edition should ensure that the text reaches a more mainstream readership.

<sup>24</sup> Léon-François Hoffmann, *Le Nègre romantique. Personnage littéraire et obsession collective* (Paris: Payot, 1973), pp. 134–36.

<sup>25</sup> Jack Corzani, 'L'Esclavage et son imaginaire aux sources du roman "gothique" antillais. Au-delà du réel?', in *Esclavage et Abolitions: Mémoires et systèmes de représentations*, ed. by Marie-Christine Rochmann (Paris: Karthala, 2000), pp. 147–62, p. 150.

At the diegetic level, as we have seen, colonial anxieties are held in check, notably in the sublimation of slavery. Moreover, in stark contrast to many of its successors — and indeed departing from its primary intertext, *Paul et Virginie* (1788) — the central love story culminates not in death but in marriage and the perpetuation of the planter line in a new generation. And yet, in parallel to a narrative glorifying a caste described as ‘les meilleurs des hommes’, an ironic voice systematically undermines the virtue and solidity of the Creole elite, casting doubt on its longevity and endurance. The island’s inhabitants, especially its women, are, with the exception of Mme Sainprale, damned with faint praise: ‘Il est peu de pays où l’on voit, *proportion gardée*, un plus grand nombre de jolies femmes [...]. Leur teint, peu coloré, peint le sentiment et appelle la tendresse. *Presque toutes* ont la peau très belle’ (p. 21, my italics). Skin, the signifier and vector of racial purity, is ‘*peu coloré*’ and *almost* always beautiful. Less subtly, the praise for the supreme morality of Martinican women is undermined by the eponymous heroine herself who, for much of the novel, behaves like a petulant and rather feckless child, and by the negative portrayal of other women such as her manipulative companion Mme Bélimé. The slave master is generally presented as a benign patriarch, yet here too close reading reveals a marked ambivalence. For example, in a remarkable assertion, and one that is never explicitly called into question, the narrator declares, ‘Le maître inhumain...il n’en existe pas à la Martinique; vu avec horreur par tous, on le forcerait bientôt à sortir de l’île’ (p. 60). Sequence of tense and punctuation here combine to undermine the ostensible thrust of a sentence appearing to establish planter rectitude and inter-planter surveillance. The suspension points that follow the subject, the inhuman master, destabilize the categorical qualifier, ‘il n’en existe pas’, opening up a space for reflection and doubt, despite the definitive denial of such a creature’s existence. This negative clause is in turn undermined by the past participle ‘vu’, suggesting conversely that such monsters *have* indeed existed and have been viewed with horror by Martinicans. The

subsequent conditional, ‘on le forcerait’, propels the past tense into the projective mood, and gestures towards the hypothetical or contingent — *if* such a master existed, this is what would happen to him, *bientôt* functioning as a somewhat unstable deictic. It is as though the sentence cannot quite sustain its own message, and instead fractures under the weight of its untenable assertion.

As this temporal instability suggests, the source of the novel’s narrative ambivalence and tension is fundamentally connected to time, in particular the time lag between the date of publication of the novel (1806) and its historical setting (1740s–70s). The plot unfurls in a period that is presented as a golden moment of impregnable colonial power. External threat (the English invasion) is swiftly and easily neutralized, and internal revolt quickly quashed (Artaban and his wife are put to death). And yet the novel was written and published at a time of great uncertainty for the slave owners of the Antilles, within a few years of the French Revolution (1789–99), in the immediate aftermath of the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), and shortly after France’s repossession of Martinique in 1802. The French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars (1802–15) were ongoing. The novel’s diegetic time is inflected at key moments by the anxieties of the writer’s present, notably relating to the French and Haitian revolutions. It therefore lends itself to a dual reading, right from an incipit which at once elevates and diminishes the colony: ‘La Martinique [...] est aujourd’hui la colonie la plus florissante et la plus précieuse que la France possède’ (p. 21). Although this opening line is an apparently unproblematic statement of Martinique’s supremacy, the slippery deictic ‘aujourd’hui’ (clearly anchored in the writer’s, rather than the characters’, ‘today’) implicitly alludes to the loss of Haiti, by far France’s most important overseas possession, which had declared itself a Republic only two years before the publication of *Les Amours*. Later, in a contrary moment that is almost entirely unprepared by the *histoire événementielle*, Martinique is described in a letter from its departing governor (who, in a

detail that underscores the time-lag between narratorial and authorial present, has been posted by the king to the ‘bien plus important’ governorship of Saint-Domingue — at the time of writing, of course, called Haiti) as ‘bien déchue de l’état de splendeur où vous l’avez pu voir: des malheurs de toute espèce ont jeté les colons dans un état de gêne’ (p. 146). The line carries narrative authority because of its source; for Traversay Church, Government and the military are revered sources. It jars, however, with the novel’s lack of explicit exploration of the decline of the planter caste. Thus the narrative asserts and destabilizes its ostensible authority, through a discrepancy between diegesis and discourse.

Temporal slipperiness, and notably the proleptic gesture, is a strong feature of the narrative, and one that does not lend itself to stable interpretation. At one point Zémédare, an early Antillean ecologist, imagines a public garden in Saint-Pierre, where ‘des plants d’arbres utiles à tous les colons’ would be available (p. 50); an authorial footnote tells us that this has now been created, and is already proving useful to Creoles. The note is doubly reassuring; it bolsters the narrator’s authority — everything he tells us must be true because this has come to pass — and gestures to the survival instinct and foresight of the plantation owners. At a later point, Zémédare asserts the necessity of a plant nursery in Martinique, where ‘les colons iront se procurer, à peu de frais, les arbres dont ils auront besoin’, before claiming that ‘ce vœu se réalisera un jour [...] dans un avenir peu éloigné [...]’. Un doux pressentiment m’enhardit à assurer que ces torts cesseront bientôt de nous être reprochés’ (p. 121). The reader assumes, given the temporal disjunction already established between the ‘now’ of the story and the ‘now’ of the telling, and the short-term cue of ‘un avenir peu éloigné’, that this nursery, too, exists. Such flashes forward beyond the temporal frame of the narrative, into the writing present, can be seen to convey the endurance of the planter caste, what Mieke Bal, analysing narrative inserts, describes as a sense of ‘deterioration [...] avoided by an



embedded improvement'.<sup>26</sup> The narrator reassuringly suggests continuity, endurance and forward planning by white Creoles.

More ambiguous, perhaps, because not confined to a footnote, nor dependent on the reader's supplementary interpretation, are two passages relating to Joséphine de Beauharnais, Napoléon's Martinican first wife. In one of her many visits to other plantations — a device by which the author fills out his 'topographie de l'île' — Mme Sainprale goes to stay with one of the oldest families in the colony. The family arrived during the lifetime of M. Duparquet, 'le premier propriétaire de l'île', and their plantation was once occupied by Mme de Maintenon (Louis XIV's second wife). The narrator continues, 'Cet exemple, en faveur de nos jolies et aimables Créoles, ne devrait pas être perdu pour la postérité. Sur le premier trône de la terre on voit...'. The story tails off, interrupted by the narrator who exclaims, 'mais, qu'allais-je dire? Cet ouvrage ne doit rappeler que des faits bien antérieurs à la révolution française!' (p. 61). The narrator here acknowledges that he has broken through his own temporal frame, but in so doing establishes the long and venerable history of Creoles, and notably Creole women, on the island. In a proleptic, if veiled, reference to Joséphine, he suggests the continuation of a history stretching from the *ancien régime* into the diegetic present (the 1750s) but also beyond, into the 1800s. Later, in an episode that may be based on fact, and which on a narrative level facilitates temporal transgression, Joséphine is visited by a fortune teller.<sup>27</sup> The soothsayer predicts a highly advantageous first marriage for the young

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<sup>26</sup> Mieke Bal, *Narratology. Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2009), p. 198.

<sup>27</sup> The incident was widely reported in contemporary sources -- see for example Eugénie Foa, 'Joséphine', in *Nouvelles antillaises du XIXe siècle. Une anthologie*, ed. by Barbara T. Johnston with Roger Little (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2017 [1837]), pp. 107-29, where the

girl (who is never explicitly named as Joséphine), and a second husband (also never named) who will bring her fortune and glory: ‘il vous chérira comme le talisman de son bonheur. Je vois les trônes sous vos pieds’ (p. 75).

On the one hand, such moments of prolepsis can simply be read as symptomatic of what Jacqueline Couiti describes as the novel’s ‘overbearingly omniscient narrator’;<sup>28</sup> it is as though the narrator cannot quite bear *not* to invoke this local celebrity, now Empress of the dominant political power in Europe and beyond. But the narrative flash-forward is introduced with a contorted and syntactically unwieldy justification (much like the convoluted sequence of tense in the reference to the ‘maître inhumain’ discussed above), suggesting that this break in temporal order is symptomatic of a greater anxiety. The narrator, as in the previous

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‘sorcière’ is named as Euphémie David -- and although disputed, finds its way into many histories and memoirs; it would become the subject of David Wilkie’s 1837 painting ‘Joséphine and the Fortune Teller’. While Traversay suggests that the fortune teller is white (‘une diseuse de bonne aventure, Mlle David’, p. 75), Wilkie appears to depict her as a mulatto woman, and Luise Mülbach describes her as ‘an old negress woman’ (*The Empress Joséphine: An Historical Sketch of the Days of Napoléon*, trans. by Rev. W. Binet, New York, A.L. Fowle, 1906 [1867], pp. 11–12). More recently Marie-Reine de Jaham, who includes the episode in *Le Sang du volcan* (Paris: Pocket, 1997, p. 46), describes her as a Malian. In one of the episode’s most curious afterlives, it features in a manga cartoon about the empress’s life (*Josephine [sic] the French Rose*, 4 vols, Tokyo: Creek and River, 2015). J. David Markham, in *Napoleon for Dummies* (Indianapolis: Wiley, 2009, n.p.), claims that Joséphine mentioned the incident before becoming duchess, and therefore that it was more than likely true.

<sup>28</sup> Couiti, *Dangerous Creole Liaisons*, p. 29.

example, quickly pulls back from this embedded story, reminding us that his story should deal only with earlier events. He hopes, however, that the reader will excuse the reporting of what he terms an ‘anachronisme’, in other words a ‘fait historique, dont la date n’est pas à beaucoup près aussi éloignée de nous, que sa place, dans cet ouvrage, pourrait le faire supposer à qui ne sait pas combien celle dont j’ai l’honneur de parler est encore jeune et belle’ (p. 75). The reference to quadragenarian Joséphine’s youth and beauty — the adverb ‘encore’ signals that we have moved back into the realm of the writing present rather than the narrated present — is consistent with the double-edged glorification of Creole women more generally, which hints at their decadence and dissipation.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, by proleptically framing Joséphine alongside the French Revolution (twice presented as being outside the narrative scope of this novel), the narrator juxtaposes the revolution which first saw slavery abolished, and the Creole empress whose husband re-introduced it (only four years before the novel’s publication).<sup>30</sup> Both brief references to Joséphine invoke her throne, metonymically reinforcing her power, and by extension suggesting that the plantocracy is secure under her reign. But the allusion to revolution, like Joséphine’s being ‘encore jeune et belle’, carries an undertow of fragility. The narrator, despite himself, points to his caste’s lack of mastery of the island’s future.

If the slippages in the temporal frame of *Les Amours* emphasize a tension between transience and endurance, the treatment of space could be seen as less ambiguous, more

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<sup>29</sup> It is plausible too that underlying the double-edged reference to Joséphine’s youth is an acknowledgement of the fact that she had not borne Napoléon an heir, a fact that would ultimately precipitate their divorce.

<sup>30</sup> There is no historical evidence supporting the widely-held view that slavery was re-introduced at Joséphine’s behest.

directly asserting a sense of rootlessness and impermanence. The opening chapter, ‘Description de la ville de Saint-Pierre et de ses environs, et quelques idées générales sur la topographie de l’île de la Martinique’, in what will become a convention of later Antillean novels, gives the dimensions of the island and methodically sketches its eight districts, twenty-eight parishes and three major cities, naming rivers, lakes, and major plantations. This approach suggests at the very least superficial mastery, in the logical co-ordination of features of the island environment.

And yet this sense of (surface) co-ordination and control masks a deeper spatial insecurity. In an early episode, the Sainprale family take a walk in their garden, a lush space of plenitude and profusion, where rivers never dry up and food is abundant. The episode includes an extensive catalogue of exotic colonial trees and fruits, among them ‘des pommiers d’acajou [...] des sapotilliers [...] [...] des pommiers cannelle [...]. Des chérémonia; des corossoliers, des cachimans, [des] pommes-chardon [...] des manghiers [...] des oranges, des chadecs, des citrons doux, des citrons aigres, et une infinie d’autres fruits qu’il serait trop long d’énumérer’ (pp. 40–41). Water is as fertile as land in this paradisiacal space: ‘des mulets, des loches, des têtards, des dormeurs, et autres poissons de rivière s’y voyaient en grand nombre: on y pêchait aussi des écrivisses d’une grosseur prodigieuse et d’un goût exquis’ (p. 39). Such Edenic projections of the plantation were commonplace in early colonial writings; on the one hand they recall the importance of botany and botanical gardens at the heart of the colonial project, an importance explicitly acknowledged in the novel as we saw above; more importantly, as Jefferson Dillman has shown, these projections served above all to act as a screen or a ‘rhetorical bandage’ for the horror and suffering that

lay behind them, suffering that this novel systematically ignores.<sup>31</sup> The narrator goes on to describe a wooded area within the garden:

Ils [les arbres] avaient presque tous, pour les propriétaires de cette demeure, des noms particuliers, qui leur avaient été donnés par le grand-père de M. Sainprale, par son fils, et par M. Sainprale lui-même. Un monstrueux baobab, qui avait près de 80 pieds de circonférence, et qui couvrait une surface de 400 pieds carrés, se nommait le marquis Duquesne; un superbe acomat était désigné par le nom de Grand-Papa; un très-grand fromager se nommait le Mariage de mon Père; un beau lecythis, dont les fleurs magnifiques parlent si fortement en faveur du système sexuel des plantes, portait le nom de Melina Ranugi, l'épouse de M. Sainprale; un courbari, de la plus belle venue, avait été nommé Carina, etc. On voyait que chacun de ces arbres retraçait les plus doux souvenirs. En respirant sous leur ombrage, en se reportant à l'évènement que l'on avait voulu célébrer en les plantant, l'esprit et le cœur se livraient aux idées les plus riantes, aux sentiments les plus touchants. (pp. 39-40)

On one level, the scene, rooted in Traversay's personal history,<sup>32</sup> could be seen to typify colonial discourse in a fairly straightforward way. The episode is framed through terms

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<sup>31</sup> See Jefferson Dillman, *Colonizing Paradise: Landscape and Empire in the British West Indies* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015), p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Madeleine de Chatenet notes that the memory of Abraham Duquesne-Guiton, Traversay's maternal great-grandfather, 's'est perpétué à la Martinique après sa mort'. She quotes Auguste's unpublished *Mémoires*, in which he notes the existence of 'un monstrueux baobab portant le nom de "marquis Duchêne" [...] il a près de 80 pieds de circonférence et couvre une surface de 400 pieds carrés'. Chatenet notes that the tree 'incarne parfaitement le caractère énergique du gouverneur Duquesne'. *Traversay*, p. 28.

pointing to ownership, endurance ('propriétaires'; 'demeure') and linear transmission ('qui leur avaient été donnés'). The wood is explicitly linked to memory; trees are guarantors of the continuity between past and present and of an ancestral lineage inscribed in the land. Naming, which here has a strong mnemonic function, is the Adamic preserve of the male, and at the service of patriarchy. Women feature only as wives and daughters (a few paragraphs later we learn that M. Sainprale has planted a 'jeune bois' as Carina's dowry), destined to ensure the continuation of patrilinearity within the Creole family. The trees named for men are, predictably enough, associated with height, girth, and enormity, while those named for women are evoked in terms of their beauty, flowering, and sexuality. Yet these trees speak above all to temporal shallowness. Planted by M. Sainprale's father, their expansiveness in space — their circumference, surface, and shadow are emphasized — do not signify chronological depth, but rather compensate for its absence. They are undoubtedly vectors of *souvenir* (the term is used in the passage), crystallizing particular incidents in the family's recent past, but they have no deeper connection to ancestral memory for a Creole family whose existence on the island extends only two generations back.

The association of the tree with familial memory is revisited later, in one of the novel's longest chapters, 'Sur les plantations d'arbres'. This chapter takes the form of a newspaper article written by Zémédare to honour the deceased Mme Sainprale, who had herself despaired of Creoles' neglect of their homes — the novel suggests this derives from both aesthetic insouciance and a more existential rootlessness — and notably, their aversion to planting trees. We can assume that the subject was close to the author's heart as, among the texts following the second volume of the original novel, Traversay includes a brief essay entitled 'Des abatis d'arbres et des plantations'. In this essay, he exhorts the government to encourage the planting of trees and to discourage their felling, and laments the lack of wood available for building houses and sugar mills in Martinique, which means that the island is

obliged to import wood from America. (The felling of trees for the purpose of building plantation infrastructure is unsurprisingly considered to be a legitimate rather than a reckless or damaging activity). Traversay also argues, in proto-environmentalist mode, that ‘les abatis d’arbres changent le cours des rivières et diminuent sensiblement le nombre de sources si précieuses sous un climat aussi brûlant’ (vol. II, p. 233). In *Les Amours Zémédare*, as an authorial porte-parole, launches an energetic defence of planting trees, highlighting their aesthetic, environmental and economic functions: trees enhance the appearance of property, produce shade, and can be sold as timber. But what he privileges above all is their association with putting down roots: connecting time past, present and future, the planting of trees is an intimation of the *longue durée*. He laments the fact that early planters, ironically, eschewed such planting, because of a tendency, even among those born on the island, ‘de n’y regarder [leur] établissement que comme ne devant avoir *qu’une durée très limitée*’ (p. 118, my italics). However, today’s (second or third generation) colonist has no reason to experience a sense of ephemerality, which was

pardonnable aux premiers habitants des Antilles, qui, chaque jour, à tout instant, regrettaient leur patrie, et ne pouvaient trouver chez eux aucune jouissance, qui avaient de si grandes difficultés à vaincre, de si grands dangers à essuyer...; mais ces temps malheureux ne sont plus; aimons le pays qui nous a vus naître [...]. Nos pères ont fertilisé par leur sueur l’habitation que nous légua leur tendresse [...].

Abandonnerons-nous leurs ossements à des mains étrangères? [...] Dépouillerons-nous nos enfants de l’héritage que nous avons reçu qu’à la charge de le leur transmettre? Apportons au contraire tous nos soins à l’améliorer, à en augmenter pour eux la valeur, à leur en faire chérir le séjour. (pp. 118-19)

With time, Zémédare argues, the alien island becomes a *patrie*; through habituation, the *habitation* becomes habitable, hospitable, home. Or, as contemporary geographers might put

it, space, invested with a sense of time, becomes place. Connecting time past, present and future, the bones of the fathers are the foundation of their children's inheritance in the future; (patrili)linear transmission is again privileged ('légua'; 'héritage'; 'que nous avons reçu'; 'transmettre'). And yet, in a typically double-edged moment, Zémédare's plea for rootedness is undercut by the final word of this highly charged passage, 'séjour', whose etymological root 'jour', a day, reinscribes transience and evanescence; any sense of permanence and longevity is unsettled through a closing signifier emphasizing the *courte durée*.

Zémédare goes on to imagine a colonist showing his wife and children around the trees that he has planted, in a passage typical of the novel's gendered division of agency. Many trees commemorate a happy event: 'le retour d'un ancien ami, l'arrivée dans l'île d'un gouverneur ou d'un administrateur bienfaisant, le jour de son mariage, la naissance de chacun de ses enfants'. The copse is also of course a memorial garden, where the plantation owner can visit 'l'urne élevée à la mémoire de sa mère, ou d'une vertueuse amie', so as to 'nourrir cette douce mélancolie, qui est un vrai besoin de l'âme' (p. 120). In closing this meditation on trees, Traversay quotes a fragment of La Fontaine's tale, 'Le Vieillard et les trois jeunes hommes', which tells of young men ridiculing the long-term planting project of the octogenarian ('Planter à cet âge!' they marvel). Traversay quotes the old man's response to their mocking:

*Mes arrières neveux me devront cet ombrage;*

*Eh bien! Défendez-vous au sage*

*De se donner des soins pour le plaisir d'autrui?*

*Cela même est un fruit que je goûte aujourd'hui!* (p. 121)

La Fontaine associates the planting of trees explicitly with altruism, and with providing for the future, which depends on an (optimistic?) investment in continuity and self-perpetuation — 'autrui' is very clearly associated with the old man's kith and kin, if not his immediate



progeny. And yet, what is excluded in the fragment deployed by Traversay is the fate of the youths: as many contemporary readers would have known, all three of the younger generation die in misadventures (the first, as it happens, on the way to America), undercutting the sense of provision for the future.

This sense of a constricted past or a radically foreclosed future extends to pre-history. Among the many visitors to Mme Sainprale in her final illness is M. Tamony, a natural historian and botanist, who is particularly interested in the rock and mountain formations of the island. (Tamony, a metropolitan, is accompanied by a local and well-respected botanist, lending local credence to his conclusions — remember the emphasis on the authenticity of local knowledge in the preface.) In a striking correlative to the shallow roots of the plantation's trees Tamony, in a series of geological observations, asserts the belatedness of the island's geological features, rather than their primal connection to a prehistoric past: 'On ne voit nulle part à la Martinique de montagne primitive; elles ne datent leur formation [...] que de l'époque de violentes convulsions de la nature, *très postérieures à la création du monde*' (p. 91, my italics). Other absences and idiosyncrasies are noted, which signal the exceptional status of the island in time and space: Tamony finds 'aucuns de ces blocs de pierre dure [...] qu'on retrouve dans *presque toutes* celles des autres parties de la terre' (p. 91, my italics). The geologist regrets the general paucity of 'minéraux importants'; hard stones such as granite occur in unusually small quantities, and when they do, they appear to have been imported. If such hard stones are notably absent, more abundant is a 'substance blanche, très friable, qui se dissout facilement dans l'eau' (p. 92). Mary Gallagher notes that 'in French, the word for duration, "durée", has the same etymology as "dur" (hard or unyielding)'.<sup>33</sup> The absence in the island's geological sub-structure of *dureté*, with its

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<sup>33</sup> Gallagher, *Soundings*, p. 85.

etymological link to *durée* and endurance, and the characterization of subterranean land as ‘friable’ — something that disintegrates easily and slips through the fingers — should be read in terms of the colonizer’s sense of ownership of the land. The paucity of hard materials underlines impermanence and insubstantiality, gesturing to the chronic unease of the planter in space and time.

It has been argued that stones and bones in post-slavery writing function as *traces*, which constitute a material connection to an otherwise unavailable primeval past. Specifically, these ancient formations and relics provide a numinous link to a prelapsarian time and space that pre-exist the plantation.<sup>34</sup> Here, in a very different construction, the lack of anteriority of stone, mineral and ancestral bone is the geological corollary of the shallow arboreal roots described above. The bones of the grandfathers, relics of a recent past, the superficial roots of the island’s trees, and the absence of any ‘*montagne primitive*’ or ‘*Pierre dure*’ betoken precariousness, illegitimacy and a lack of mastery of time and space (it goes without saying that the novel makes no reference to any pre-colonial past; historical time begins with the first planter). White Creoles are thin on the ground, demographically (the recurrent extended lists of planter surnames should be read as consolatory litanies, working against this sense of isolation), and thin *in* the ground too. Both the anteriority and the future of the island are shown to be compromised, uncertain, foreclosed. Traversay, confidently announced by Joyau in his Introduction as a ‘*Créole de vieille souche*’,<sup>35</sup> works to undermine any idea of Creole antiquity, and explores rather the extent to which place is inseparable from displacement, possession from anxieties around dispossession.

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<sup>34</sup> McCusker, *Patrick Chamoiseau*, pp. 119–26.

<sup>35</sup> Joyau, ‘Introduction’ to *Les Amours*, p. 9.

It would be tempting for the modern reader to see a further layer of contemporary resonance in these shallow roots and geologically recent stones, for one of the criticisms levelled against postcolonial literary studies is precisely its short memory, its lack of temporal depth, or what David Coleman has called its ‘presentist hubris’.<sup>36</sup> The neglect of white Creole writing, by *dix-neuviémistes* and postcolonialists alike, derives from a number of interrelated factors. For the nineteenth-century scholar, the privileging of literariness excludes works of questionable quality which were often negatively received even in their own time; critics who are attuned to the impact of colonization and slavery on the collective psyche have often looked to the French canon (Hugo, Mérimée, Sue) to interrogate such issues. For the postcolonial reader, meanwhile, the range and quality of twentieth and twenty-first century Antillean literature means that the exhumation of mediocre, uneven and ideologically questionable writings by *the* archetypal dead white Christian men of property could be seen at best as perverse, and at worst as a kind of intellectual bad faith. Yet the absence of textual and theoretical work on Creole writers defies some of the key principles of Postcolonial Theory, which looks to the impact of empire on the colonizer as well as the colonized (or rather, seeks to show how deeply imbricated these two perspectives are), and supposedly eschews the hierarchies of literary value (hierarchies which in any case seem to be more easily suspended for the metropolitan writer than for his, or rarely her, Creole counterpart) which dominate more traditional literary criticism.

This article has argued for the importance not only of the literary excavation of early Creole novels — a task which has been largely accomplished by critics such as Toumson, Corzani and Antoine — but also of close textual reading, against the grain, of their *histoire*

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<sup>36</sup> David Coleman, *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), p. 212.

*événementielle*. Looking beyond the content and contours of plot (although it goes without saying that early fiction is a storehouse of precious information and historical detail) helps to uncover the discursive strategies at work under the diegetic surface. In this case, my analysis has focused on the temporal and spatial anxieties experienced by white Creoles, anxieties that are, superficially, kept at bay. There are, however, many other tropes and themes in Traversay's *Les Amours* that connect him to subsequent generations of postcolonial writers, and that are worthy of further development. For example, Traversay's investment in and celebration of the local, as well as his meditations on tree-planting, finds parallels in many later Caribbean novels, and might be seen to resonate with the defence of the mangrove and the Creole garden by vocal ecologist, and once vice-president of MODEMAS, Patrick Chamoiseau.<sup>37</sup> On a more self-referential note, the narrator's insistence on the veracity of the tale stakes a claim to the 'truth-value' of the novel, a claim common in eighteenth-century fiction. But this could also be seen to prefigure the self-legitimizing strategies of contemporary narrators, and notably Chamoiseau's *marqueur de paroles*, who insists upon the real-life sources for, and the lack of artifice involved in, the writing of fiction. Zémédare's position as a self-critical author who reflects on the business of writing and reception points the way, moreover, to the musings of the manifold authorial doubles that can be found in the fiction of writers from Maryse Condé to Raphaël Confiant to Jean Bernabé and Chamoiseau. When reflecting on the vagaries of literary criticism, generated largely by idlers and oafs ('[des] réunions d'oisifs'), Zémédare observes that the best way to stifle good writing would be to listen to 'tous les donneurs d'avis' (p.130); he could thus be said to prefigure

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<sup>37</sup> See in particular Chamoiseau's early novels *Chronique des sept misères* and *Solibo Magnifique*. MODEMAS = 'Le Mouvement des démocrates et écologistes pour une Martinique souveraine'.

contemporary novelists' heightened awareness of, and pronounced cynicism towards, the critical reception of their work.<sup>38</sup> Seeking out, analysing and problematizing such commonalities might enable us to move beyond Walcott's pessimistic binary diagnosis of postcolonial Caribbean writing, as 'a literature of revenge written by the descendants of slaves and a literature of remorse written by the descendants of masters'.<sup>39</sup> In the final analysis, such textual work might also enable a nuancing of Said's model of contrapuntal reading, elaborated in *Culture and Imperialism* and deployed most famously in regard of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (and what it supposedly did not say about slavery).<sup>40</sup> As well as scouring the canonical metropolitan nineteenth-century novel for gaps and *non-dits*, so as to identify the submerged presence of empire at the heart of a text ostensibly unconcerned by it, the contemporary critic can, through the fractures, fissures and disjunctions operating in narrative, understand how the apparent security and comfort of colonial discourse is destabilized from within. Such a contrapuntal reading allows early writings to intersect with, and complicate our understanding of, the Antillean literary tradition. At the same time, though, the contrapuntal challenge for the contemporary critic is to revisit these texts without making them bear too much interpretative strain, so as to avoid co-opting them to fit what we

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<sup>38</sup> See Maeve McCusker, 'Authorising a Tradition. Theory, Criticism and (Self-) Canonization in French Caribbean Writing', *French Cultural Studies* 24.1 (2013), 77–92.

<sup>39</sup> Walcott, *What the Twilight Says*, p. 37.

<sup>40</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 95–116. For a reading that claims that slavery is much more visibly present than Said allows, see Susan Fraiman, 'Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture and Imperialism', *Critical Inquiry*, 21.4 (1995), 805–21; see also Elizabeth A. Bohls, *Romantic Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 40–47.

might call an analeptic postcolonial agenda. In other words, the nineteenth-century postcolonialist should bear in mind Stephen Greenblatt's wry observation: that what one hears when one tries to speak with the dead is 'one's own voice'.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations. The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 1.