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The Place of Dwelling: Reconceptualizing Caribbean Identity through Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, Juan Francisco Manzano, and Patrick Chamoiseau

DISSERTATION

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by

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VITA

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Place of Dwelling: Reconceptualizing Caribbean Identity through Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, Juan Francisco Manzano, and Patrick Chamoiseau

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Professor Adriana M. Johnson, Chair

This dissertation explores the significance of space in the creation of existential meaning and the development of a collective identity in Spanish and French Caribbean literature. Subjection to colonial and neo-colonial exploitation and displacement has limited the ability of Caribbean people to develop a meaningful connection with the Caribbean space. Through the romantic novel *Sab* by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and the autobiography of Juan Francisco Manzano, I analyze how "habitation" and "livable forms of life" emerge as ways Caribbean literature navigates this displacement and helps cultivate meaningful connections with places for Caribbean people. In the first chapter, "Habitation", I analyze how the novel *Sab* uses Romanticism to reimagine the small-scale as sites where relationships between various forces shaped the Caribbean space, offering a positive association with the past and prompts an emotional and intellectual exercise to foster a meaningful connection to spaces. In the second chapter, "Livable Forms of Life," I analyze how the *Autobiografía* explores the relationship between the narrator and the city La Habana and how the performance of subjectivity leads him to return to and transform La Habana into a "home." In the last chapter, "The Place of Dwelling," I build upon the two conceptual frameworks of the previous two chapters to illustrate

how *Texaco*'s reappropriation of the bildungsroman genre creates a new conceptual framework: the autobiography of space. Through *Texaco*'s focus on space and the various ways of being-in-the-world developed in each site *instead of* focusing the narrative on an individual person, the novel's culmination in the establishment of Texaco the shantytown celebrates a collective being-in-the-world characterized by heterogeneity, and most importantly the appreciation of, attachment to, and the preservation of space.

INTRODUCTION

Part I: Why Avellaneda, Manzano, and Chamoiseau?

Much of the critical work surrounding Francophone Caribbean literature focuses on the intellectual and artistic exchanges among French Antillean writers. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, the French Antilles functioned primarily as sites for the production of raw material and human labor in the triangular trade without the appearance of an identifiable literary tradition for the first three hundred years under European occupation. While it remains unquestionable that the Spanish Caribbean islands were also invaluable sites of production for the Spanish Crown and the triangular trade, the nineteenth century in the Spanish Caribbean is a period marked by the development of several literary traditions. From novelists like Manuel de Jesús Galván, to playwrights such as Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, to poets like Julián del Casal, we observe the inception and recognition of various literary approaches that represent a regional, if not yet national, consciousness in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba since the early 1800s. With the exception of Haiti, it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century with Saint-John Perse's *Éloges* (1911) that we begin to observe the emergence of a similar literary tradition in Martinique and Guadeloupe that academia now refers to as *Francophone* Caribbean literature. One could argue that the latent "genesis" of a *French* Caribbean literary tradition has prompted the rigorous academic work to identify patterns and evolutions that this region shares in common *aside from* sharing a common colonizer. The fact is that this curiosity that has prompted academics to search for patterns and commonalities in French Caribbean texts is also at the forefront of the various literary approaches from this region. Is there a regional, national, or even collective consciousness in the French Antilles? From past poets like René Depestre to contemporary novelists like Edwidge Danticat, novelists, poets, essayists,

playwrights, and writers of all kinds from this region have pursued and are still exploring this line of inquiry.

At the same time, the heterogeneity of Francophone Caribbean literature and the challenges in identifying common patterns among these literary texts derive from a set of movements that have shaped the histories of the greater Caribbean, not just the French Antilles. According to Nick Nesbitt, there is a threefold movement that is foundational in the constitution of the French Caribbean space: (1) the mutilation of space (through violent ruptures such as the Middle Passage) that "[created] moments of existential and epistemological crisis and terror", (2) the implementation of new spatial relationships (through dispossession and eventually neocolonial relations of departmentalization) in order to "stabilize these conflicts, crises, and divisions", and (3) Caribbean people's various approaches to critique and overcome the "spatial crises, divisions, and repressive stabilizations" that new spatial relations attempted to stabilize (Nesbitt 646). The degree to which the Middle Passage shaped the individual histories of each Caribbean island varies according to several factors, such as the duration of European occupation. For example, we can observe a more aggressive importation of African slaves to Saint-Domingue from the beginning of French occupation in the seventeenth century whereas other Spanish colonies like Cuba and Puerto Rico do not witness an exponential increase in the importation of African slaves until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Differences aside, the historical fact is that from the 12 million African slaves who were transported across the Atlantic from the 1500s to the 1800s, approximately 4.7 million slaves became an integral part of and shaped the history of the Caribbean. There are certain differences in the "existential crises" that took place in the Caribbean as a result of the Middle Passage, but these differences do not distinguish the Spanish and French Caribbean so much as to make each region's history

unrelated. The shared experiences of existential crises such as the fear of a violent slave uprising, the implementation of new spatial relations such as North American occupation and French departmentalization, and Caribbean peoples' various approaches to critique and overcome spatial crises, divisions, and repressive spatializations are greater than the differences that distinguish the French from the Spanish Caribbean.

This framework is the foundation for the selection of literary texts and the objective of this dissertation. I select *Sab*, a romantic novel, and *Manzano*, a slave autobiography, both Hispanic Caribbean texts from the early nineteenth century, to explore the unique way *Texaco*, a Francophone Caribbean novel from the late twentieth century, appropriates the Bildungsroman genre and participates in the ongoing discussion on the existence of a regional or collective consciousness in the Caribbean. In short, *Texaco* is an autobiography of a place. While the novel models many of the characteristics of a Bildungsroman, its appropriation of this genre is distinct because the narrative of growth and transformation is focused on a *place*, Texaco the shantytown, *instead of* a person. The narrative locates the origin of this shantytown *not* in Martinique's burgeoning capital Fort-de-France but in the heart of Martinique, in the interior where a delicate ecosystem of slave labor, domestication of natural and material elements, and combination of different ways of inhabiting the natural environment together pave the way for the development of the wealthy coastal cities wherein Texaco the shantytown will eventually emerge. While Texaco the shantytown's *location* is in the outskirts of Fort-de-France, the narrative of growth leading up to its appearance makes it clear from the beginning that the *space* it occupies (and is sustained by) spans across multiple locations wherein different ways of being-in-the-world were first practiced. Comparable to the banyan tree, Texaco the shantytown is born from an original trunk ("la grand-case") that gradually spread outward through aerial roots (the

journeys of Esternome and Marie-Sophie), developing accessory trunks in various sites ("l'habitation", "l'En-ville", and "les bitations", "les petits-cases"), obtaining nutrients from the plantations, Saint-Pierre, Fort-de-France, eventually plunging its roots in the location of Texaco the shantytown. To imagine Texaco as a living organism like the banyan tree depicts the journeys of Esternome and Marie-Sophie as the various stages of maturity that Texaco had to undergo in order to arrive where it does at the conclusion of the novel. Building upon this framework, I read the narrative of Texaco's maturation and official establishment as a municipality recognized by the urban planners of Fort-de-France as an autobiography of a place that narrates the development of Texaco's process of self-discovery to become a modern subject. This representation of Texaco the shantytown as a modern subject animates and attributes a certain level of meaning to the disparate sites that constitute the French Antilles and the distinct ways of being-in-the-world that Caribbean peoples cultivated from each of these sites (in Martinique and the Greater Caribbean) to make this space their home. In short, the autobiography of Texaco the shantytown is a response to the question "does the French Caribbean have a collective or regional consciousness and what does it look like?"

Prefaced by my analysis of Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda's novel *Sab* and Juan Francisco Manzano's autobiography, I also read *Texaco* as a literary marriage of Spanish-American Romanticism with the slave autobiographical narrative. This approach to reading *Texaco* highlights the unique qualities of Chamoiseau's non-conventional Bildungsroman and, from the comparison with these Spanish Caribbean texts, I emphasize the role that space plays in the inception and development of a collective identity. *Sab* and the *Autobiografía* are representative of the process of self-discovery that comes through creating and attachment to spaces. Avellaneda and Manzano's narratives narrate the different processes in Caribbean

literature that came to link the development and emergence of an identity, whether that be an independent, liberal subject or an enlightened class of Cuban creoles, with the creation of and attachment to spaces. From the "interior" of Cuba towards which Avellaneda's text shifts the reader's gaze to the porous and vibrant city of Havana that Manzano's narrative transforms into the Ithaca of the narrator's Odyssean quest, each text emphasizes the indisputable role that spaces play in the narrative of self-discovery. Archipelagic thinking and postcolonial thought offer a counterpoint to this discourse by analyzing the fragility and ephemeral nature of identities that derive from attachment to or preservation of space. The exclusionary politics associated with communities such as the nation-state and the fragmented physical geography of the Caribbean itself are some examples that problematize the idea that a collective Caribbean identity, if that is even possible, can be sustained by a place. Furthermore, from the perspective of globalization and urbanization, it is indisputable that the displacement of rural communities in the Global South from their homes has begun to question the fate of collective communities who are sustained by their connection to space. I examine how *Sab*, the *Autobiografía*, and *Texaco* offer a counterpoint to these ideas in how each text illustrates the practice of identity formation through the creation of spaces.

In the first chapter, "Habitation", I examine how *Sab* consolidates a collective, pre-nationalist, creole identity through the construction of the amalgamated hero, Sab the slave. Put into relief by the extreme materialist avarice and solipsistic ignorance of other characters, Sab the slave models a way of being-in-the-world that simultaneously values and instrumentalizes the natural environment and its resources. The second chapter, "Livable Forms of Life", delves into the autobiographical narrative of Juan Francisco Manzano to examine how the narrator's performance of subjectivity, the part of the narrative that pertains to the narrator's affirmation of

the self, is connected to the narrator's experience of growing up in and making his way back home to Havana. In spite of the fact that the *Autobiografía* is a heavily manipulated text, the autobiography of the *self,* the narrative that the narrator wants to depict, emerges from the narrator's attachment to and identification with a set of experiences, skills, and people that he acquired in and returns to, situating the culmination and resolution of the story in Havana. "The Place of Dwelling", the last chapter, illustrates how the themes of "habitation" and "livable forms of life" reappear in *Texaco* and transform the Bildungsroman into an autobiography of place. Through this reading, I reimagine Texaco the shantytown as a figure that both sustains and embodies the collective consciousness of the various peoples who inhabited, traveled, and contributed to the creation of the Caribbean as their *own* space. Furthermore, Texaco the shantytown becomes a model that both incorporates the changes brought about by the propagation of urbanization and globalization while resisting the displacement, detachment, and devaluing of space that have become synonymous with these changes.

Part II: Key Terms and Ideas

> il n'y a pas d'identité venue à forme sans travail sur et par l'espace pour en signifier les constituants (Chivallon *Espace* 30).

This passage comes from Christine Chivallon's text, *Espace et identité à la Martinique*, an anthropological study that examines the ways in which Martinican peoples began to develop a collective identity through their connections to "*lieux*" that began long before emancipation in 1848 and continued into the period of French departmentalization in the 1960's. This passage is useful as it opens onto the general academic discourse on space and articulates a question on what the relevance of space might be in the formation of a collective identity or even a regional consciousness: if "le travail sur et par l'espace" signify the constituents of a collective identity,

what does “espace” refer to?. In what follows, I identify a few significant key terms that have and continue to be used in critical theory to add some necessary nuance to the characteristically ambiguous term “space”. From a sociological perspective, the increasing displacement of rural communities to urban spaces suggests that these communities, namely in the Global South world, that depend on and are sustained by “le travail sur et par l’espace” are slowly disappearing. Within the spectrum of spaces that these communities can inhabit, the spaces that these communities inhabit are for the most part located in rural areas. Thus, in light of the propagation of urbanization and globalization, it would appear that the permanence of these spaces and these communities’ continued historical ties to them will eventually disappear. On the other hand, Chivallon’s study offers a counterpoint to this idea by focusing on how the “mise en oeuvre” of the Martinican peasantry of the nineteenth century led to the “production d’une identité collective” (*Espace* 32) that continued to develop and be sustained well into the period of industrialization and urbanization in the French Antilles. Building upon Chivallon’s thesis, I argue that instead of thinking about these spaces as fixed locations, we need a more accurate metaphor to illustrate what these “espaces” are and how they continue to play a role in the lives of “displaced” peoples.

That metaphor is an ecosystem. When we re-imagine spaces as systems in which various people, wildlife, objects, vegetation, operations, and formal and informal structures reciprocally affect and sustain each other, it becomes more transparent how these spaces adapt, assimilate, expand, move, and reestablish themselves even under some of the most destructive of circumstances. To anthropomorphize spaces can be used to support a certain kind of problematic perspective that places a disproportionate amount of agency on the people, plants, and animals that constitute these spaces. This anthropomorphized representation of space can be used to put

forth the fallacious argument that no matter how destructive an invasive presence may be, the constituents of these spaces will always be able to regenerate. A brief visit to a museum of natural history would be enough to quickly dispel the notion that perpetual regeneration is possible for all living organisms; extinction is just as likely as adaptation and evolution. My objective in representing space as an animated amalgamation of living organisms, objects, and structures is to highlight spaces' remarkable efficiency and tendency to improvise even in the most unfavorable circumstances. As Nesbitt points out, the history of the Caribbean space is characterized by a series of violent ruptures, spatial mutilations, and reproduction of structures that disproportionately favored certain people while disenfranchising others. The inherited pessimism that comes from this bleak history is precisely what the novel *Texaco* (and the literary traditions upon which it builds its autobiographical narrative) is putting into question. Let us consider some frameworks that support and put into relief the optimism towards the survival of spaces expressed by writers like Chamoiseau.

Michel De Certeau, Gilles Deleuze, Nigel Thrift, and Henri Lefèbvre are at the forefront of the academic discourse on space. In summary, these thinkers converge on the idea that space is not a preexisting blank canvas but instead space is the outcome of various kinds of production: processes, practices, strategies, tactics, et... While this academic discourse builds on the concept of production according to Marxism, I find the term "appropriation" more compatible with my analysis. In Lefèbvre's *The Production of Space*, he argues that as long as certain kinds of spaces, such as "abstract space, the space of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism" (57), remain in place, "so long must the project of 'changing life ' remain no more than a political rallying-cry" (60). The only reason different spaces exist is because there is a constant, ongoing appropriation that disrupts "definite" or "fixed" spaces. Likewise, Gilles Deleuze aims to unsettle the idea that

the "here and now" are a given, fixed point in time and space: "rather than a self-contained Now that happens once and for all (at time t), an event is an untimely Meanwhile or Meantime: a becoming multiple (and, but) rather than a being-one (is). So space-time does not consist of points, but of folds" (Doel and Clarke 143). It is important to note that there are different kinds of appropriation. Unlike the exploitative appropriation that is often employed in the capitalist production of space, there is also appropriation that, demonstrated by Amerindian cultures, simultaneously makes use of and preserves what is readily available (this is a fundamental aspect of space production that is especially true of the Caribbean space). In *The Practice of Everyday Life,* De Certeau describes two different kinds of appropriation: tactics and strategies.

> Strategy, he sees, as the imposition of power through the disciplining and organization of space – zoning activities, prescribing some activities in some places, proscribing them in others. Tactics are the 'ruses' that take the predisposition of the world and make it over, that convert it to the purposes of ordinary people (Crang 108)

Tactics, or "making do", is the "art of placing one's blows, a pleasure in getting around the rules of a constraining space" (De Certeau 18). This is the only kind of appropriation that can effectively, in Deleuzian terms, "unsettle" fixed or definite spaces, such as capitalist spatializations. Similarly, in *Spatial Formations*, Nigel Thrift echoes De Certeau's claim: space is produced when people "utilize well-known and well-used procedures or codes creatively […] 'for another first time'" (18). The production of space does not necessitate the eradication of what is available; on the contrary, the production of space is all about using what is already at hand. According to the works of these scholars, space emerges from a socially, temporally, and physically dynamic of relations between agents and their environment. The representations of space by Avellaneda, Manzano, and Chamoiseau reinforce and build on this idea of space as a dynamic of relations, both human and non-human. For the purposes of this dissertation which

focuses more on the emotional and sentimental dimension of space, I add more nuance to this concept of space by considering a familiar but distinct relative to the word: "place".

To begin, I would like to draw attention to a conceptual framework depicted in *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Here, Martin Heidegger describes space as a special set of relations that emerge as a result of man's dwelling: "the bridge does not first come to a location to stand in it; rather, a location comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge" (Heidegger 152). Simply put, "spaces open up by the fact that they are let into the dwelling of man" (Heidegger 154-155). This description of space emphasizes the longing for attachment, the desire and measures taken by humans to attach themselves, grow and identify themselves in spaces. The conceptual framework of "the dwelling of man" transforms the physical location – the positioning of people, living beings, and things on a two-dimensional plane – into the outcome and transforms human desire for attachment into the precondition necessary for spatial production. Heidegger's description of space lays the foundation for my analysis of the development of the autobiographical narrative of space in the Caribbean precisely because it points to the "*dwelling of man*" as the *soul or spirit* of space and the *constituents* as the *body* of space. With this in mind, let us consider how "place" fits into this conceptual framework. "Place" is often associated with the adage: "a house is a space; a home is a place". There are many more aphorisms similar to this one but all of which essentially describe "place" as a space that has been invested with sentimental meaning, a site that people have developed an intimate connection with or has been personalized (and sometimes even personified) by the dwelling of the people who produced that place. The latter part is more important: place is a space that has been personalized. In the words of Timothy Cresswell, "places must have some relationship to humans and the human capacity to produce and consume meaning" (8). If one were to juxtapose space and place, space is a realm devoid of meaning,

whereas place is a realm that emerges through its relationship with humans and the meaning they invest in that place. I use the term "space" and "place" interchangeably throughout this dissertation, but in both cases, I intend to emphasize the personal meaning of the location instead of the location itself. Cresswell's concept of "place" and Heidegger's concept of space resonate with each other insofar as each framework emphasizes the importance of the desire and steps taken by humans to bring a site into existence over the site itself: "place as dwelling, then is a spiritual and philosophical endeavor that unites the natural and human worlds" (Cresswell 22).

In *Les non-lieux*, Augé argues that "the changing characteristics of space, time, individuality and place in an excessively modern or 'supermodern' world" has contributed to the "proliferation of non-places" (Merriman 27). Similar to Deleuze, Augé believes that there are dominant spatial configurations, which he calls non-places, that must be unsettled and disordered. According to Augé, place (or as he refers to it in his text, "anthropological space") is

> localized, occupied, familiar, organic, historical and meaningful to its occupants and visitors, 'a space where identities, relationships and a story can be made out' […] Place, here, is associated with prolonged fixities and practices of dwelling; echoing humanistic ideas and those associated with Martin Heidegger (Merriman 29)

Augé emphasizes the deeply personal and intimate meaning of places over the constituents of that space. What is particularly important in Augé's definition is that place is described as an *amniotic* space where an individual can consolidate an identity, relationships, and stories. In other words, the purpose of space is not just survival, there is also a formative and generative function for those who occupy it. In the same vein, Arturo Escobar has emphasized the generative function of places in being able to resist and combat increasingly homogenizing spatializations, though he articulates this through his study of "local geographies". He stresses that "attachment [indigenous] groups feel to particular places […] social movements are therefore intimately linked to local geographies; culture resides in places, even as globalization

advances" (Batterbury and Fernando 156). The only way to resist the erasure of cultural heterogeneity caused by the effects of globalization is through the preservation of these local geographies. What is worth noting in Escobar's definition is that there must be a definite attachment to these spaces; the preservation of these local geographies themselves is not enough. While Escobar and Augé's definitions resonate with many of the conceptual frameworks presented by the scholars presented in the previous paragraph, Zygmunt Bauman's contribution to this discourse is quite distinct. Contrary to Augé, Bauman argues that places are not invested with personal meaning because the human condition is inherently that of exile: "Not only does Bauman eschew the cult of personality he holds responsible for undermining public life, he maintains that the human condition is necessarily one of exile. We are all outsiders, strangers to even ourselves" (Clarke and Doel 47). It is important to note that Bauman's conception of place is deeply grounded in the alienating, estranging effects of modernity (in addition to postmodernity which is just modernity's "posthumous form"). The preservation of "personal spaces" within the context of modernity and postmodernity is redundant for the goal of these hegemonic spatializations is the erasure of "social solidarity": "Bauman had come to recognize that modernity's obsession with imposing order necessarily produced outcasts […] Personal survival under postmodern conditions relies on the refusal of social solidarity" (Clarke and Doel 49). Unlike Escobar, Bauman does not believe that the preservation of places such as "local geographies" can effectively resist the alienating and homogenizing tendencies of globalization because "modernity […] tore apart the connection between social interaction and physical proximity" (Clarke and Doel 50). And yet, Bauman's claim about pure, physical space proves to highlight an aspect of Cresswell's interpretation of place: there is no such thing as places devoid of people, histories, and meaning.

> our very sense of objective, physical space derives from the 'phenomenological reduction of daily experience to pure quantity, during which distance is 'depopulated' and 'extemporalized'. What we objectify as 'pure space' is but an abstraction, freed of 'content relative to time and circumstance', deriving from social space (Clarke and Doel 50).

Even though he does not believe places as amniotic spaces have been able to survive under the crushing and homogenizing effects of modernity, he does not believe that social spaces, where the exiles are sent to, have ever been "empty" or devoid of meaning. The concept of a blank canvas upon which time, people, and things emerge is a phenomenological effect of modernity. Bauman argues that all spaces are saturated with "content relative to time and circumstance". Considering this key feature that is constitutive of all spaces it will be useful as we move onto the next term: "ways of being-in-the-world".

There is a certain particularity about "space" in the Caribbean. In the field of Caribbean studies, it is widely accepted that the plantations played the most formative role and left long-lasting effects in the Caribbean. In *The Repeating Island,* Antonio Benítez-Rojo argues that "the arrival and proliferation of the plantations is the most important historical phenomenon to have come about in the Caribbean, to the extent that if it had not occurred the islands of the region might today perhaps be miniature replicas—at least in demographic and ethnological terms—of the European nations that colonized them" (38-39). Lefèbvre's concept of "abstract space" is problematized when compared to the plantation system of the Caribbean space. There were certainly wealthy *criollos* and *békés* living in the Spanish and French Caribbean islands but that does not necessarily mean that they were to be considered "bourgeoisie" or that the spaces they controlled were "capitalist space". The constitution and function of these spaces make it particularly difficult to apply the concept of appropriation. The degree to which laborers could "disrupt" or "unsettle" a plantation by means of appropriation (which is a fundamental

characteristic of capitalist space) varied greatly and ultimately were not examples of anti-colonial actions. The plantation was constituted through a violent mutilation of preexisting structures, namely the modes of subsistence practiced by Amerindian peoples, and its principal function was exploitation. Here I make a distinction between "the first plantation" from "the Plantation" to identify a trajectory in the development of the Caribbean space (which will be discussed in further detail ahead) while simultaneously emphasizing the continuous, inherent characteristics of the Plantation. By "Plantation", Benitez-Rojo refers to a specific kind of territorialization that began at the end of the seventeenth century characterized by a heightened dependency on the extraction and exploitation of crops and monoculture and on its "links to the mother country" (*Repeating* 58-60). It also produced spaces "dominated by sugar warehouses, commercial offices, […] the fort, the docks, and the slave shacks" (*Repeating* 63); in other words, a factory-like organization of space. One can see why, therefore, it is problematic to apply De Certeau's concept of "tactics" in this context. First, the Caribbean space was violently mutilated through Western occupation – they were not, in Bauman's terms, "pure physical space" upon which plantations emerged. Secondly, to apply De Certeau's concepts of "tactics", "using well-known codes creatively", the "art of placing one's blows", or "appropriation" to the Caribbean, to suppose that these dominant spatial configurations could be appropriated and converted "for the purpose of ordinary people", we need to consider the specificity of the Caribbean to avoid placing a disproportionate amount of agency on the lives of the vast majority of people who constituted these spaces.

Instead of using "tactics", which implies a clever, somewhat playful method of getting around the rules, I prefer the term "way of being-in-the-world". In humanistic geography, "place was seen as a universal and transhistorical part of the human condition. It was not so much

places (in the world) that interested the humanists but 'place' as an idea, concept and way of being-in-the-world" (Cresswell 20). This term emphasizes the plurality, gradient, and constant transformation of place. What is more important than a bridge, a hut, a tree, or a pond is the diverse array of ways humans, specifically Caribbean peoples, fulfill their being-in-the-world. Ways of being-in-the-world are intrinsically dissimilar and undergoing constant transformation by virtue of their relationship with humans' capacity to decide what is meaningful and how that meaning can be created from and invested into spaces. The different ways of being-in-the-world I examine and use to organize this dissertation are "habitation" and "livable forms of life".

"Livable forms of life" is a term that anthropologist Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins uses to describe ways of being-in-the-world of people living under colonial subjection (namely the ways of being-in-the-world that Palestinians practice under the oppression of the Israeli government). According to Stamatopoulou-Robbins, livable forms of life are the collective outcome of when people create possibilities out of a set of conditions that are inescapable but also pliable, out of their destroyed ecological conditions ("Colonial Destruction"). Though she does not believe livable forms of life are anti-colonial, they are opportunities to resist the dominant structures of colonialism by manipulating the conditions (which are pliable) to produce the dynamic of relations that are described by Heidegger and Cresswell: people have a way of personalizing spaces, making them more humanistic. If and how these livable forms of life are performed is entirely decided by humans' capacity to decide what is meaningful (whether that meaning be sentimental and intimate or impersonal) and if they identify themselves with that meaning. What would be considered a "livable" form of life to certain people during a specific moment may be "unlivable" to those same people at a different moment; there is no obligation to abide by a specific way of being-in-the-world. "Livable forms of life" are based on the

foundation that spaces are meaningful only as long as they remain *habitable,* which is an entirely personal matter. Adjacent to this idea of "livable forms of life", "recreation" is associated with a wider set of practices that are worth considering. On the one hand, "recreation" implies a certain kind of playtime, an enjoyment or pleasure without any specific object as an outcome. Even though this concept of recreation as playtime, as interpreted through the lens of developmental psychology, is associated with productive creativity, "the approach of the individual to external reality" (Winnicott 91), "recreation" as it was allowed and performed on plantations is an entirely different matter. In *Scenes of Subjection*, Saidiya Hartman argues that "recreation" was part of the mundane routine of violence in the plantations: "the most invasive forms of slavery's violence lie not in these exhibitions of 'extreme' suffering or in what we see but in what we don't see […] in the benign scenes of plantation life […] recreation obscure[s] the quotidian routine of violence" (42).

Seemingly benign and, for lack of better terms, playful, recreation was one of the most obscure and sinister ways through which laborers on the plantation experienced violence. Whether recreation took place as attending mass on Sundays or singing and dancing, recreation was designed and designated by the plantation system. The designation of what counts as "recreation" by colonial structures forbids, by default, those who are trapped in these inescapable conditions from inventing their own "ways of being-in-the-world", from creating meaning from their relations with their environment. The key word is "forbids"; simply because recreation on plantations was regulated by colonial structures does not mean people living under these conditions (which are pliable) were unable to develop their own livable forms of life in a *subterranean* way, hidden away from their masters. At the same time, laborers' capacity to create meaning even within these horrific conditions does not mean these livable forms of life

were anti-colonial. Hartman acknowledges this: "I do not mean to suggest that everyday practices were strategies of passive revolution but merely to emphasize that peregrinations, surreptitious appropriation, and moving about were central features of resistance or what would be described as the subterranean 'politics' of the enslaved" (50). This distinction between recreation and passive revolution illustrates how those livable forms of life actually emerge in the realm where colonial recreation and total freedom overlap. There is a gradient within recreation and there is a gradient in total freedom. In many cases, which will be illustrated through Manzano's autobiography, the creation of existential meaning is the outcome from the subject's oscillation within this gradient or spectrum of recreation and surreptitious appropriation. The place that makes the greatest degree of oscillation available to the subject who is on a quest for existential meaning ends up becoming the site that the subject identifies as *their* place. The transformation from *a* space to *someone's* space is based entirely on what counts as *meaningful* for that subject. The narrator's performance of subjectivity in the *Autobiografía*, the representation of the narrator's creation of existential meaning, is a pattern of surreptitious appropriations, disruptive relocations, deftly employed obeisance, and tragic setbacks that culminate in the narrator's return to his beloved Havana. This city signifies Manzano (and to a certain degree Manzano comes to signify a version of Havana) because the way of being-in-the-world that he is able to experience there is emotionally satisfying. For a place like Havana to become a metonym for a subject's quest for existential meaning, a sentimental longing for or attachment to that place is necessary.

I take "livable forms of life" as an appropriate way to describe the measures taken by an enslaved subject to create meaning within an inescapable set of pliable conditions. The reader of *Sab* will quickly realize that a close reading of this text requires the use of another conceptual

framework to describe this unique representation of space and how humans occupy that space in a meaningful way. Written from the perspective of a creole, Cuban expatriate born and raised in Camagüey, *Sab* provides a set of seemingly incompatible images of Cuba that represent a dynamic of tensions produced at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Cuba that posed a series of questions to Cuban creoles. *Up until now, what kind of relationship have we created with this space? What have we done (or neglected to do) to preserve, exploit, appreciate, or undervalue the space we have created and continue to occupy? Who do we see ourselves as in relation to Cuba? What is Cuba to us?* Implicitly embedded throughout the narrative, these questions constitute what I describe as an emotional and intellectual exercise for the reader. The novel's edenic representations of nature right alongside depictions of the physical labor and the commodities that sustain and contribute to the development of the flourishing Cuban oligarchy suggest a kind of skepticism towards any particular way of being-in-the-world that leans too far in either direction. While the disproportionate focus on individual experience produces a certain naïveté and solipsism, its opposite, a way of being-in-the-world driven by excessive emphasis on materialism and avarice produces degeneration and spoliation not only of the space itself but the subject's ability to create a meaningful connection with that space. The middle ground, that way of being-in-the-world that is modeled by Sab the slave by his ability to strike a balance between human sentimentality and materialism, the autochthonous and the foreign, the individual and the collective, is what I describe as "habitation".

A term used to describe the plantation in *Texaco*, "habitation" is a conceptual framework that was used by key thinkers and founders of the literary movement of "créolité" to re-imagine the plantation system, the spaces that were created as a result, and the role it plays in the formation of a regional consciousness in the French West Indies (Gallagher 152). For *créolistes*,

"habitation" served the purpose of creating, or rather inventing, a more positive association between the past and the present of the French Antilles. In efforts to generate a sense of collective belonging, creolistes used "habitation" to reimagine the plantations as sites where French West Indians first experienced the dynamic of relations between various forces, both human and non-human, and played a central role in the creation of spaces that would eventually become places of dwelling. To a certain degree, one could argue that the imagination of "habitation" replaces the violent scenes of subjection to terror and exploitation of the plantations in exchange for benign scenes of ordinary actions performed in patterns that eventually shaped the present French Caribbean space, something more palatable for the modern French West Indian. Even if this were the case, the replacement of these harrowing images of the past with more benign scenes creates the possibility for French West Indians to cultivate (or rekindle) a connection to something, someone, someplace that is meaningful to them. For creolists like Chamoiseau, the hostility associated with the past becomes a hindrance in the French West Indian's capacity to form a positive association with the present (and future) experience of the Caribbean space. The imaginary offered by "habitation", however imperfect it may be, prompts an emotional and intellectual exercise – similar to the one represented in the novel *Sab* – as a way to cultivate new, more responsible and emotionally positive associations with the spaces humans have occupied and presently occupy. The same questions that *Sab* prompts for its reader can also be articulated through Chamoiseau's narrative. If the relationship between French West Indians and the French West Indian space is to be restored, if a collective or regional consciousness is to be consolidated, there are habits that need correction, fractures that need mending, and connections that need to be restored.

For Chamoiseau, the biggest obstacle for those changes and adaptations to occur in the present has to do with an underlying hostility that French West Indians have towards their past and severe underappreciation of the physical space they inhabit. Manzano's "livable forms of life" become a useful tool to highlight the ways in which *Texaco* represents not only the evolution of the various ways of being-in-the-world various Martinicans practiced at different moments in the history of the French Antilles; through this representation *Texaco* also highlights the optimism and generative function within each livable form of life. Each way of being-in-the-world was the best viable option given its respective set of inescapable, yet pliable, conditions. *Texaco* does not represent any one particular livable form of life modeled by Esternome or Marie-Sophie as superior to another. Instead, the narrative reserves the space to appreciate each particular livable form of life within its respective context *for the sole reason that,* in its own unique way, it was *meaningful* to its subject. Within each space, through the performance of each way of being-in-the-world, the subject's desire to create existential meaning for themselves was affirmed and cherished. However imperfect or misinformed the subject's approach or actions were, the fundamental aspect that transformed their form of life into a *livable* one was their desire to create something *meaningful*. The pattern that develops through this repetition of trying out different methods, experiencing setbacks, celebrating small victories, mourning losses, and very frequently being displaced (sometimes violently and other times voluntarily), culminates in the creation and establishment of Texaco the shantytown. Far from being the conclusion of a long journey to self-discovery, Texaco the shantytown symbolizes the achievement of a collective being-in-the-world that through its heterogeneity, imperfect improvisation, constant reinvention, and underlying commitment to cultivate and maintain attachment to space, will inaugurate a future tradition of *place-guardians*. Through the title of this dissertation and this

third chapter, “the place of dwelling” represents not only the ongoing process of pondering the question “*is there a collective consciousness in the Caribbean?*” that is represented in various literary genres across the linguistic borders of the Caribbean but also to illustrate the constant and unwavering importance of space. As an autobiography of place, if Texaco the shantytown were to request one thing, it would be the following: *hold onto me*.

CHAPTER 1: Habitation

Part I: Introduction

The detailed record on the life and works of Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda offer two distinct avenues for the analysis of the novel *Sab*. On the one hand, there is the biographical analysis of Avellaneda's works. Scholars such as Brigida Pastor argue that "while driven by ideals of romance, [Avellaneda] attempted to advance her early unconventional, feminist, views through" works such as *Sab* (169). On account of the existence of a thorough record of the personal life of the author, it is possible to conduct a biographical study of Avellaneda's works. Based on these records, one may argue that Avellaneda's early adult life was very unconventional:

> unusually, for the time, she rejected a marriage arranged for her by her parents, she sought financial independence from her family through the capricious career of writing, indulged in several hopeless love affairs, and even became an unmarried mother, all unconventional and nihilistic behaviour for women during her era (Pastor 172)

Born and raised in Puerto Principe (now Camagüey), Cuba, the young Avellaneda demonstrated a reluctance to conform to the destiny that had been adopted by many young women of the wealthy Cuban aristocracy during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It is likely that the context in which Avellaneda spent her adolescence and early adulthood played a formative role in the development of her unconventional life choices. Firstly, there was an "intensa vida intelectual y política que se llevaba a cabo en Puerto Príncipe en el período de la juventud de Gómez de Avellaneda" (Maxwell 20). In addition to the rigorous education in the arts, letters, and sciences that she received during her formative adolescent years, Avellaneda was privileged in that she spent a significant part of her early adulthood in a site where she had

access to a vibrant intellectual community. Moreover, in the years leading up to her departure to Spain in 1836,

> hubo un breve período de relativa libertad de expresión en la zona oriental de Cuba […]. En este contexto, Gómez de Avellaneda asistió a las tertulias convocadas por su familia, y es muy probable que haya tenido acceso a los periódicos y revistas provenientes de Puerto Príncipe y de la Habana, editados por miembros de la corriente liberal reformista de Domingo del Monte (Maxwell 20)

The privilege of receiving a well-rounded education, living in a site where there was access to a diversity of political and intellectual discourses during a period of comparatively unrestricted freedom of speech likely contributed to the author's personal view of the world and influenced her writing in a significant way. Scholars such as Pastor interpret the influence of Avellaneda's personal experience in her works as a metaphorical expression of her personal, romantic views: "Avellaneda's own romantic views are directly reflected in each novel […] the book *Sab* might almost be called 'Avellaneda' because it is through the main character, Sab, that again the personal traits and ideas of the author are transparently manifested" (175). Pastor takes this argument further and claims that "Avellaneda uses the metaphor of black slavery to present women's oppression in society. Thus, she puts her own feminist words into Sab's mouth when the slave condemns society for his oppressive fate" (176). Thinking about her characters as mouthpieces for her personal ideals makes it challenging to infer anything about how *Sab* wrestles with the political tensions, ideological and aesthetic shifts of the larger, socio-historical context of early nineteenth century Cuba.

The purpose of my study is oriented toward this question: how does space play a role in the representation of a collective identity? Considering this, I find the interpretation of critics such as Alexander Selimov more sensible and compatible with the analysis I am interested in: "el problema surge cuando el interés por la personalidad y la biografía del autor se impone y opaca

el aspecto artístico de su obra" (62). An interpretation that emphasizes the biographical profile of Avellaneda can obscure "la comprensión de su arte, a la vez que se escamotea su condición de artista y su función de creadora de obras de ficción" (Selimov 64). My analysis of *Sab* is based on the premise that Avellaneda engages critically with the literary, aesthetic, and ideological discourses of her socio-historical context. This critical engagement is evident in her novel *Sab*, in whose preface Avellaneda "reconoce la presencia de ideas políticas en *Sab* […] deja en claro que no se trata de una simple novela sentimental" (Maxwell 23-24). There are two major discourses Avellaneda's work engages with. The first of the two is the abolitionist, anti-slavery discourse:

> la esfera pública letrada decimonónica leyó *Sab* como una novela abolicionista y anti-esclavista, fuera o no esta la intención de la autora. […] es posible afirmar que su novela participó, con todos sus prejuicios raciales y europeizantes de la época, en la elaboración y circulación de discursos anti-esclavistas en España y Cuba" (Maxwell 17).

Avellaneda's work aims to advance the abolitionist movement considering that the period in which she wrote this novel, 1836-1838, coincides with "un período marcado por la emancipación de los esclavos de las colonias británicas en 1838" (Maxwell 20). There has been debate on the extent to which one can argue that Avellaneda's text engages with abolitionist discourses in a significant way. For example, according to Maxwell, the representation of the protagonist Sab is far too docile and noble to serve as a figurehead for the liberation of all slaves: "la representación de Sab como el noble salvaje marca una línea divisoria clara entre él y la masa de esclavos negros que trabajan en los cañaverales […] Sab evita convertirse en un rebelde como el cimarrón haitiano" (26-27). Furthermore, she argues that "la representación del esclavo sirvió como un vehículo o metáfora para denunciar la esclavitud de la mujer blanca" (Maxwell 32). The degree to which this novel endorses or supports the institution of chattel slavery in the Americas is a question that goes hand in hand with a deeper question: how does this novel represent the ideologies and aesthetics of movements like the Enlightenment, Neoclassicism, and

Romanticism? Most importantly, my analysis of *Sab* is concerned with the question of why did Romanticism become an effective way to articulate and explore the tensions and debates that revolved around identity and nationalism? Both the Enlightenment and Romanticism in Europe and in the Americas were movements that were deeply concerned with questions of identity and nationalism, and who have been included or excluded from these identitarian and nationalist discourses. The fact that *Sab* uses and represents tropes and aesthetics that were characteristic of romantic texts is not a unique fact in itself. I build upon Alexander Selimov's research to argue that *Sab* is simultaneously representative and symptomatic of the origins and development of Romanticism itself in the Spanish Caribbean. The meta-narrative – the history of the development of Romanticism in the Spanish Caribbean – behind the narrative – the story of Sab and Carlota – offers a way to understand how space plays a formative role in the development of a collective identity in the Caribbean imaginary.

Sab by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda is essentially a romantic text. However, the assumption that there is anything coherent about romanticism is a debatable one. On the hand, a common characteristic among German and British romantics is their emphasis on the revival of religion. For example, German romanticism was "characterized as having been, broadly speaking, a counter-revolutionary phenomenon that reacted against the rationalist and materialist tendencies of Enlightenment and Revolutionary France", which was often articulated through the "need for a revival of religion" and resulted in "a cult of introversion" (Day 136). Similarly, this emphasis on the revival of religion is also a defining characteristic of works by English romantics like Samuel Taylor Coleridge who "argued for a religious revival to be led by the upper class" (Day 136). On the other hand, romantics like Percy Shelley are critical of the cult of introversion and self-referential ideology that was advanced by writers like Coleridge. For

romantics like Shelley, the universe "is in many respects a secularized universe. It was precisely his lack of belief in some benevolent absolute power that led him to criticize those who insisted on individual communion with such a power and to emphasize, instead, the need for human beings to help each other on earth" (Day 145). While it remains questionable that there is anything coherent about romanticism, it is safe to assume that romanticism as a whole has become synonymous with "poetic essence, or even of the lyrical quality", often in juxtaposition with the neoclassical, which is often "given the despective label of cold, rational and unpoetic" (Kahlihuoto 2). In sum, for an aesthetic and ideological movement that is defined by its lack of cohesion, it is worth noting that the primary way it has been defined is in opposition to or in contrast with the Enlightenment and neoclassical aesthetics. Therefore, if romanticism has been characterized as a revolt against something else, it is plausible to assume that romanticism has *internalized* aspects of the ideologies and aesthetics from which it has distinguished itself. *Sab* was published in Madrid in 1841, situating this novel towards the latter end of the British Romantic period (1789 - 1832) and at the beginning of American Romanticism (mid-1830s to early 1860s) (Day 187). While romanticism originates in Europe in the late eighteenth century, "its dominance in the Hispanic literatures is limited almost exclusively to the years around the 1830's" (Kahiluoto 2).

Notwithstanding the historical fact of the novel's publication, what does it mean to identify Avellanada as one of the "Romantics"? Is *Sab* a reactionary response to the materialistic tendencies of the Enlightenment? Is this novel a revolt against the neoclassical aesthetics of the eighteenth century? Most importantly, what kind of universe does the novel invite the reader to imagine the ideal set of relations in which humans relate to each other and their environment? My goal is to consider how the paradox that has come to characterize the development of

Spanish Romanticism – a movement that revolts against and internalizes materialism and rationalism – is a useful comparison to illustrate how *Sab* plays out the tensions of the secular versus the religious, the rational versus the spiritual, the self-referential versus the collective, the foreign versus the native, the materialistic tendencies of the wealthy, land-owning class versus the rational versus the poetic beauty of nature and the environment, without resolving any of them. Similarly to English Romantics like Percy Shelley, Avellaneda situates the human experience of the characters in relation to a secularized version of nature right next to the social and the material world that often appear to be in stark contradiction with the secularized version of nature the novel depicts. In a socio-historical sense, *Sab* brings to the foreground the patchwork of tensions and anxieties that permeated the Cuban social fabric at the turn of the century. The novel depicts the brutality of slavery, the exploitation of Cuba's natural resources, the expropriation of profits by English merchants and *peninsulares*, and the generalized fear of a violent slave revolt. At the same time, Sab presents these scenes of suffering and exploitation *right alongside* edenic depictions of the Cuban natural environment and its plentiful resources. Instead of participating in the cult of solipsism and introversion that emerged from certain literary traditions in English romanticism, *Sab* describes and celebrates a kind of collective existence in which the material, the social, and the natural, the foreign and the autochthonous all engage reciprocally with each other.

I build upon the *créoliste* movement of twentieth-century French Caribbean writers through my use of the term "habitation." "Habitation," which is used synonymously with the term "plantation" in French Caribbean writing, connotes a duration, an ecosystem, a habitat (Gallagher 152). Through this perspective, the "habitation" represents the plantation as a "fruitful, sustaining womb, and 'amniotic space'" (Gallagher 167). The representation of the

plantation in *Sab* is characterized by a delicate relation of natural and human resources, thus transforming the plantation's potential to serve as an "fruitful, sustaining womb, an 'amniotic space'" for the creation of a collective identity, a kind of Caribbean identity. *Sab* invites the reader to imagine how the Caribbean space could lead to more harmonious and equitable social relations among Cubans by illustrating *how* the material and the natural elements, the foreign and the indigenous elements, the criollos and the laborers, the covet to generate wealth and the desire to celebrate the beauty of nature that constitute that space *ought to be used* to lead to produce this amniotic space. The universe *Sab* represents is not entirely secular or religious, natural or material, Caribbean or European. Through this unique representation of space where different forces and influences are often at odds, *Sab* models three different ways of being-in-the-world, epitomized by Carlota, Enrique, and Sab, ultimately converging on the way of being-in-the-world modeled by Sab the slave as the only one that may lead to the creation of a positive, congenial, collective identity for all Cubans.

Part II: A Romantic Triptych

¡Perla del mar! ¡Estrella de Occidente!
¡Hermosa Cuba! Tu brillante cielo
la noche cubre con su opaco velo,
como cubre el dolor mi triste frente.

¡Voy a partir!… La chusma diligente,
para arrancarme del nativo suelo
las velas iza, y pronta a su desvelo
la brisa acude de tu zona ardiente.

¡Adiós, patria feliz, edén querido!
¡Doquier que el hado en su furor me impela,
tu dulce nombre halagará mi oído!

¡Adiós!… Ya cruje la turgente vela…
el ancla se alza… el buque, estremecido,

las olas corta y silencioso vuela!

Avellaneda's poem "Al partir" illustrates important characteristic of her writing: "la expresión artística de un modo particular de ver y representar las relaciones humanas y sociales" (Semilov 60). The fact is that this characteristic of her writing is representative of the aesthetics of Romanticism that "gave a special importance to individual experience" and supported the idea "that the faculty of imagination was of special significance" (Day 3). The description of Cuba in the first stanza conveys the brilliance and magnificence of Cuba through metaphors that emphasize the *distance* between the poet and Cuba to the reader "perla del mar […] estrella del occidente". Through the representation of Cuba as a celestial body, the poet conjures images of remoteness, as if Cuba were an unreachable treasure. The language in the following stanza conveys something quite different. The poet describes her departure from Cuba as a painful uprooting from a native soil, "para arrancarme del suelo nativo". All of a sudden, Cuba is not just a faraway gem or celestial body, it is described as a nurturing space, a place where one can experience rootedness. The juxtaposition of these two representations of Cuba suggests that the poet imagines Cuba as something that is simultaneously faraway *and* close, drifting *and* stable. This representation of a "home" that is both near and far reappears in the following stanza where the poet refers to Cuba as "motherland" and "beloved Eden", emphasizing the poet's intimate connection with the island. However, the verses "¡doquier que el hado en su furor me impela, //tu dulce nombre halagará mi oído!" seem to imply that the poet's connection to the island is intensified as she travels *away from* that space. The mentioning of its name brings a certain gratification to the poet: her pride derives from knowing she *comes from* Cuba, not that Cuba belongs to her. It is important to note that poet never refers to Cuba with the first-person possessive adjective "my". She only refers to Cuba through the definite article "your". This

conveys, again, a certain distance between Cuba and the poet: it is a place that cannot be possessed. In spite of this quality, the poet is still able to experience a certain kind of attachment to Cuba. The poet is unable to describe Cuba or its qualities as her own but the poet's closeness and attachment to Cuba intensifies as she begins to drift away from that place. The universe the poet imagines her relationship with Cuba is one in which antecedence and permanence of Cuba function as agents that gave the poet the opportunity to experience belonging. Sorrow replaces this experience of belonging and attachment as the poet is pushed away from the island's "zona ardiente". It is as if the poet does not realize the degree to which her temporary proximity to Cuba created the experience of belonging to Cuba. Once she has crossed the zone of influence, this experience becomes accessible through the mention of Cuba's name. Cuba becomes an entity that extends the experience of attachment and belonging to its dwellers, which implies that its dwellers can either be sensitive or unaffected to its zone of influence. The poet experiences this sorrow as she departs only because she *met* Cuba while she was still within that "zona ardiente".

This emphasis on personal sentimentality, human emotions, and how these contribute to the imagination of space as an entity that reveals itself to dwellers can be read as one of the defining features of romanticism. The rejection of the rule of logic and reason that defined the Enlightenment is often associated with the romantic aesthetics. I add some nuance to this idea and argue that this "acercamiento con la naturaleza"

> el enfoque en la emocionalidad del "yo" y en los sentimientos naturales del ser humano pretende encarrilar el desarrollo cultural hacia un acercamiento con la naturaleza a través de un proceso comunicativo basado en el despertar de los instintos y las pasiones, esto es, alejándose de lo racional y de la postura intelectualista (Selimov 61)

The association between nature and human emotion and sentimentality should not be simplified as the opposite of reason and logic. To associate human feelings and sentimentality with nature

can lead to a problematic schematic that its opposite – namely "lo racional" and "la postura intelectualista" – is necessarily associated with the opposite of nature – namely the material world. Furthermore, this schematic leads to the juxtaposition of the movements that each opposite pole is associated with: Romanticism becomes the opposite of the Enlightenment. Lastly, this schematic that pits human emotions against reason and logic, nature against materiality, Romanticism against the Enlightenment obscures the way in which all of these ideas are actually interconnected with each other. A more sensible schematic like a Venn diagram depicts the poet's imagination of Cuba or her relationship with Cuba in the poem "Al partir" more accurately. The poet's relationship with Cuba is deeply sentimental. However, the poet is able to have this transcendental experience of intimacy with Cuba through a coexistence of sensation *and* emotion, the experience of proximity *and* distance, the perception of Cuba as both "estrella del oriente" *and* "nativo suelo". The experience of intimacy with Cuba derives from a *relation* of tensions, not an opposition. In *Sab*, the place that epitomizes the overlap between the natural world and the material world, exploitation and protection, is the small-scale plantation.

From the beginning, it is clear that Avellaneda aims to shift the reader's attention to the small-scale plantation. Instead of setting the novel in "the colonial and commercial center located in Havana" (Rodenas 158), "Gómez de Avellaneda turns her gaze to the interior of Cuba […] where the natural beauty of the land provides an idyllic setting for the emergence of creole (criollo) values" (Rodenas 154). Communion with nature, a trope that is characteristic of romanticism, is certainly a poetic, idealistic way to represent a being-in-the-world that may be conducive to a transcendental experience which may very well manifest itself through "the emergence of creole (criollo) values". *Sab*'s depiction of the island's natural beauty may be representative, in an idealistic way, of the development of an intimate relationship between

certain[1] *criollos* and the island. In the words of Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, "from poem to national anthem, singing the beauty of the landscape and celebrating the most distinctive geographical features of the various islands have helped foment an emotional link between the land and the people who inhabit it" (9). One of the ways in which Avellaneda's depiction of the natural beauty "[foments] an emotional link between the land and the people who inhabit it" is how she classifies species of native fowl: "el verde papagayo con sus franjas de oro y de grana, el cao de un negro nitido y brillante, el carpintero real de ferrea lengua y matizado plumaje, la alegre guacamaya, el ligero tomeguin, la tornasolada mariposa y otra variedad de aves indígenas" (*Sab* 39). In describing the species of birds, the narrator chooses to identify them by their local names, "hence the description privileges local knowledge over 'universal' categories, emphasizing a deeply rooted sense of place" (Rodenas 158). One could argue that this kind of description derives from an older literary tradition by which British colonizers justified their exploitation of natural resources and human labor. In *Colonizing Nature,* Beth Tobin argues that during the British colonization of the West Indies, the representation of nature was a way to "investigate how these modes of representation constructed the tropics as simultaneously paradisiacal and in need of British intervention and management" (2). Similarly, the representations of nature in *Sab* are indicative of a positive portrayal of the creoles' occupation of Cuba. However, "in the process of offering up beautiful images of discrete items", these poets, historians, and botanists "erased the conditions under which tropical commodities were

[1] I add this qualifier "certain" because at the same time this novel first appeared, there was a simultaneous emergence of a wealthy landowning class in Havana who contributed to the devastation of the natural environment of Cuba. Benitez-Rojo argues that "it was this astute and ambitious social class that completed the construction of the Creole Machine, a plantation machine, one of the most powerful and devastating to the environment ("Sugar and the environment" 40). The wealthy landowning class of Havana that emerged as a result of the Spanish empire's economic ineptitude developed values that prioritized skillful and calculated exploitation of the land over "releasing the earth into its own presencing". The enterprising character and ambition of these criollos ultimately led to the devastation of the environment. Avellaneda's text describes a unique kind of "existence with" the environment that opens up the opportunity for the creation of an "anthropological space".

produced, and in the process substituted their own literary and artistic efforts in the place of local producers' work" (Tobin 11). These paradisiacal depictions of nature that are devoid of the formative role the material and social play in the production of space in British colonial literature are symptomatic and representative of a certain version of European Romanticism – namely, the cult of introversion and solipsism that characterized the representation of nature of writers like Wordsworth and Coleridge.

I argue that *Sab* emerges from and manifests the tension that is created between the "tropical commodities" and the material and social conditions under which they were created, the tension between the "beautiful images" of the Caribbean that were created by and justified European intervention and the image that Caribbeans created for themselves. *Sab* simultaneously distinguishes itself from and internalizes the images, aesthetics, and ideologies that were offered by European Romanticism. It essentially is a narrative of self-discovery – what is Cuba, who are Cubans? – that emerges through a process that alternates between searching for external images and turning inward, to the interior of Cuba, precisely where *Sab* turns the reader's gaze to from the very beginning. To a certain degree, the novel's descriptions of nature are comparable to the idyllic, rustic, and uncorrupted depictions of nature that characterized pastoral literature. These depictions strongly suggest that the novel endorses a certain version of colonization of the Caribbean islands:

> El sol terrible de la zona tórrida se acercaba a su ocaso entre ondeantes nubes de púrpura y de plata, y sus últimos rayos, ya tibios y pálidos, vestían de un colorido melancólico los campos *vírgenes* de aquella *joven* naturaleza, cuya *vigorosa* y *lozana* vegetación parecía acoger con regocijo la brisa apacible de la tarde, que comenzaba a agitar las copas frondosas de los árboles agostados por el calor del día [my emphasis] (*Sab* 39).

The description of nature with adjectives such as "virginal", "young", and "healthy" connote images of a harmonious relationship between an untouched paradise and the care and

stewardship of a benevolent guardian who can protect and administer the plentiful resources of that paradise. In short, this image is compatible with the presence of European intervention and management that is depicted in eighteenth century British colonial literature. At the same time, unlike the images offered by these British colonists, the novel does not erase the conditions under which tropical commodities, namely sugar, were produced. The narrative goes great lengths to bring the local producer and the laborer's work to the foreground from the very beginning. Sab's first conversation with Enrique Otway is one of the most detailed descriptions of the laborer's work in the island:

> bajo este cielo de fuego el esclavo casi desnudo trabaja toda la mañana sin descanso, y a la hora terrible del mediodía jadeando, abrumado bajo el peso de la leña y de la caña que conduce sobre sus espaldas, y abrasado por los rayos del sol que tuesta su cutis [...] ¡Ah sí!; es un cruel espectaculo la vista de la humanidad degradada, de hombres convertidos en brutos, que llevan en su frente la marca de la esclavitud y en su alma la desesperación del infierno (*Sab* 43).

The same majestic sky adorned with silver and purple clouds that whispers gentle breezes across virginal fields and hosts the various species of indigenous birds that populate the edenic setting of Cuba's interior is also a torrid dome that hangs above and burns the naked skin of the thousands of men and women who have been dehumanized and stigmatized by the institution of slavery. This sequence of descriptions that awkwardly places the social and material conditions under which the tropical commodities are produced right next to descriptions of the natural beauty and fertility of Cuba produce a certain kind of uneasiness in the reader. This sequence of images that shifts the reader's gaze between benign, pastoral representations of the beauty of Cuba's natural resources and harrowing representations of the brutality of slave labor elicits a sense of disorientation and ambiguity: in which direction should the reader shift their gaze? Most importantly, what is the meaning of these seemingly contradicting images? I find the triptych *The Garden of Earthly Delights* by Renaissance painter Hieronymous Bosch to be a useful

comparison to illustrate what this shift between the harmonious and disconcerting, the beautiful and the appalling is meant to convey to the reader of *Sab*. The paradisiacal representation of the Garden of Eden on the left and the eschatological representation of Judgment Day on the right shift the viewer's gaze to the center of the triptych, the middle tableau that contains recognizable elements from both the Garden of Eden and Judgment Day: preservation and spoliation, harmony and chaos, delight and suffering. It remains unclear whether the middle tableau of the triptych is meant to be interpreted as an admonition to ward off impending calamity and destruction or as a lamentation for a paradise lost. Similarly, it is unclear whether *Sab*'s middle tableau where both the brutality of slavery and the harmonious beauty of nature exist is a warning or a lamentation. I argue that this ambiguity is intentional, it keeps the reader's gaze in the center where the sorrow of a paradise lost and a warning against further misfortune and deterioration exist simultaneously. The novel's representation of this distinct pair of images – beautiful images of an immaculate natural setting as well as harrowing scenes of human suffering and degeneration – invites the reader to grieve what has already been lost over the course of the colonization of Cuba *and* to pay heed to the social and material means of production that colonization introduced that could become *either* their salvation *or* an accelerator towards impending doom. Whether these social and material means of production become Cuban creoles' deliverance or curse depends on *how* these means are used.

Sab depicts the small-scale plantation as the middle tableau of its romantic triptych by representing *three* different kinds of ways of being-in-the-world, each modeled by three different characters: Carlota, Enrique, and Sab. Carlota's characterization is unique in the way it represents the intimate communion with nature and the exaltation of sentimentality that characterizes romantic writing. In other words, Carlota's behavior is indicative of the

uncorrupted pleasure and delight that is associated with the Garden of Eden. At the same time, Carlota's behavior also becomes a model of the naive, carefree, and ignorant behaviors that many creoles exhibited in light of the socio-economic changes that were taking place during the beginning of the nineteenth century. While Carlota exhibits an intense sentimentality and adulation of natural beauty, she also exhibits a childlike innocence and lack of discernment that indicate a disconnect from the rule of logic and reason that defined the Enlightenment. In short, Carlota's detachment from the ideals of the Enlightenment makes her an inadequate model for the ideal behavior and values that creoles should adopt in order to preserve and use the abundant natural resources, to think and act strategically vis-à-vis the threat of foreign exploitation. At first glance, Carlota's monologues and interactions with nature make her appear as the paragon of human sentimentality and spiritual enlightenment that is celebrated in Romanticism:

> Y luego, cuando llega la noche, cuando la naturaleza se adormece en medio de las sombras y las brisas, ¿no has sentido tu corazón inundarse de una ternura dulce, indefinible como el aroma de las flores? … ¿No has experimentado una necesidad de oír la voz querida de la noche? ¿No te ha agobiado la ausencia, ese malestar continuo, ese vacío inmenso, esa agonía de un dolor que se reproduce bajo mil formas diversas, pero siempre punzante, inagotable, insufrible? Una lagrima empañó los ojos de la apasionada criolla (*Sab* 64).

Carlota's conversation with Enrique Otway depicts the important role that sentimentality and communion with nature play for Carlota. On the one hand, her poetic description of and sensitivity to the natural world are so intense and filled with passion, it gives the impression that she loses touch with reality when she is overcome with bliss derived from her experience with nature. On the other, this impassioned description of nature and emphasis on personal sentimentality, which are unequivocally representative of Romanticism, are essentially positive indicators of the transcendental experience that comes by means of "un acercamiento con la naturaleza".

Carlota is described as “un alma superior” several times throughout the narrative, endowed with an extraordinary capacity to dream “un cielo en la tierra” (*Sab* 54). The following passage is one of the most obvious examples of how Carlota models this transcendental experience through her communion with nature. Here, Carlota is described as a child playing with a butterfly she catches in the garden that Sab made for her. This innocent pastime serves as a vehicle to transport Carlota to a transcendental experience:

> Su rostro se embellece con la expresión del triunfo, y mira a la prisionera por una abertura del pañuelo con la alegría de un niño: pero inconstante como él cesa de repente de complacerse en la desgracia de su cautiva: abre el pañuelo y se regocija con verla volar libre, tanto como un minuto antes se gozara en aprisionarla [...] conviene a las almas superiores descender de tiempo en tiempo de su elevada región: que necesitan pequeñeces aquellos espíritus inmensos a quienes no satisface todo lo más grande que el mundo y la vida pueden presentarle. Si se hacen frívolos y ligeros por intervalos, es porque sienten la necesidad de respetar sus grandes facultades y temen ser devorados por ellas (*Sab* 79)

An activity that may appear as a puerile pastime, the narrator describes, is actually indicative of the need of “almas superiores” to search for and derive fulfillment from “pequeñeces”, such as chasing and capturing a butterfly in the garden. For “almas superiores” such as Carlota, moments of communion with nature are fulfilling because, by comparison, all the wealth and splendor that the material world can offer them does not dazzle or attract their attention. One can argue that Carlota models key attitudes and values of Romanticism: “Romanticism gave a special importance to individual experience [...] the faculty of imagination was of special significance and [...] this faculty was celebrated along with a profound sense of spiritual reality” (Day 3). Furthermore, Carlota’s profound admiration of nature is representative of the emphasis on nature’s transcendental energy celebrated by Romantic writers like Wordsworth: “Nature is important insofar as it manifests the same transcendental energy as informs the human mind” (Day 40). At the same time, Carlota’s profound sense of spiritual reality that she derives from her

communion with nature is indicative of a dissociative way of being-in-the-world. The verb "descender" suggests a certain kind of disconnection that takes place in the mind of Carlota when she communes with nature. In order for Carlota to have this spiritual experience with nature, she steps down from her "elevated" position – an unquestionably privileged position granted to her at birth by her family's socioeconomic status – and disconnects from "todo lo más grande que el mundo y la vida pueden presentarle" – the enterprise of sugar production that comes along with being the daughter of a land-owning family. The profound experience of nature that Carlota exhibits is conducive to the spiritual enlightenment that is celebrated in Romanticism. At the same time, Carlota's emphasis on individual experience and the faculty of imagination creates a *distorted* perception of the world. Romantics like Percy Shelley are critical of this introversion because the emphasis on "private contemplation of spirit will lead only to a discovery of personal spiritual vacancy and of the sheer inaccessibility of absolute spirit or power" (Day 145). Building upon Shelley's criticism of private contemplation and introversion, I argue that Carlota's perception of the world – which is characterized by this emphasis on individual experience – disconnects her from the forces of supply and demand that permeate the paradisiacal plantation that she so passionately adores. Her father's plantation Bellavista is a sanctuary that retains some of the remaining natural beauty of Cuba but it *also* contains rich natural resources and human labor that play an integral part in the triangular trade and the burgeoning development of an affluent, wealthy class of land-owning creoles, to which she belongs, since the latter half of the eighteenth century.

The disconnection that Carlota makes from Cuba as a material space filled with rich resources and Cuba the Garden of Eden makes her unaware of her privilege that comes from

being the daughter of a land-owning family. As Carlota converses with Teresa, her orphaned cousin, Carlota appears blithely unaware of this fact:

> El destino parecía haberla colocado junta a Carlota para hacerla conocer por medio de un triste cotejo, toda la inferioridad y desgracia de su posición. Al lado de una joven bella, rica, feliz, que gozaba el cariño de unos padres idólatras, que era el orgullo de toda una familia, y que se veía sin cesar rodeada de obsequios y alabanzas. Teresa humillada, y devorando en silencio su mortificación, había aprendido a disimular, haciéndose cada vez más fría y reservada (*Sab* 52).

Carlota's wealth and status inherited from her family's plantation do not in themselves distort her perception of her cousin's despondent misery. Rather, Carlota interprets Teresa's coldness as simply a characteristic of her personality *by consequence of* the kind of introverted existence she leads: "Carlota aunque dotada de maravilloso talento había concluído por creer, como todos, que su amiga era uno de aquellos seres buenos y pacíficos, fríos y apáticos, incapaces de crímenes" (*Sab* 52). This depiction of Carlota's ignorance of Teresa's misery is indicative of Carlota's emphasis on individual experience: her unique way of being-in-the-world obscures the way her family's love and adulation and the wealth generated by her father's plantation create the necessary conditions for her to live such an introverted life wherein she enjoys "pequeñeces" such as capturing butterflies in the garden. In spite of the fact that she is a "superior soul" gifted with "maravilloso talento", Carlota is blithely unaware that she is one of the most privileged and spoiled members of Cuban creole society. Carlota is so ignorant of the role her family's wealth and status play in her comfort and security that she disregards the role that wealth plays in the arranged marriages between the sons of European merchants with the unsuspecting daughters of land-owning creoles like herself. Instead of adopting a perspective grounded in the reality of her privileged situation, Carlota adopts an impassioned, romantic vision – similar to the way she experiences nature – of her arranged marriage with Enrique Otway. Carlota's overwhelming

infatuation with Enrique and her superior ability to imagine marriage as a purely romantic union of two souls holds her back from taking precautions to protect herself and her family:

> Tres meses habían corrido desde que se trató su casamiento con Enrique Otway [...] juramentos que eran para su corazón tierno y virginal tan santos e inviolables como si hubiesen sido consagrados por las más augustas ceremonias [...] Aún no había llegado para la sensible Isleña esta época dolorosa de una primera desilusión: aún veía a su amante por el encantado prisma de la inocencia y el amor, y todo en él era bello, grande y sublime (*Sab* 53-54).

Carlota's impassioned infatuation and idealistic vision of marriage distorts her perception of Enrique and the avaricious motives concealed behind their marriage.

The narrative's portrait of Carlota – a doe-eyed, privileged daughter of a wealthy, land-owning family – represents the Cuban creole who has become oblivious to the abundant natural resources of the island and the appeal it attracts from European merchants eager to partake in Cuba's sugar boom. The narrative shows that Carlota's way of being-in-the-world leads to an indulgent kind of existence – as illustrated by Carlota's behavior in the garden and her carefree attitude towards the comfort and luxury her family's wealth has afforded her – without regard to possible threats that may occur under the carelessness and negligence enabled by their comfortable lives. The narrative makes it explicitly clear that the generalized apathy enjoyed among certain Cuban creoles gives way to Europeans' exploitation of their land and all its resources: "con la facilidad con que se vive en un país de abundancia, [los habitantes] se adormecen, por decirlo así, bajo su sol de fuego, y abandonan a la codicia y actividad de los europeos todos los ramos de la agricultura, comercio e industria" (*Sab* 55). The figure who embodies this avarice is Enrique Otway. Son of Jorge Otway, an English peddler, Enrique is born into a family with a considerable amount of wealth and affording him the luxury to associate himself with "la clase más pudiente, servido de esclavos, dueño de magníficos carruajes y con todos los prestigios de la opulencia" (*Sab* 55-56). Enrique adopts a perspective

and way of being-in-the-world to the natural resources of Cuba and his arranged marriage to Carlota that are diametrically opposed to the ones Carlota exhibits. In sum, while Carlota's distorted perception of Cuba and her marriage with Enrique blinds her from the socioeconomic factors that allow her to enjoy her privileged position, Enrique's perception is distorted because he *only* sees and is driven by the potential for economic profit found in the natural environment and his arranged marriage with Carlota.

The same land that is perceived as an edenic paradise by Carlota elicit ideas of wealth and capital gains under the gaze of Enrique: "el viajero acortaba cada vez más el paso de su caballo y le paraba a trechos como para examinar los sitios por donde pasaba. A la verdad, era harto probable que sus repetidas detenciones sólo tuvieran por objeto admirar más a su sabor los campos fertilísimos de aquel país privilegiado" (*Sab* 39). From the very beginning, the narrative captures Enrique's perspective of nature and its resources: what he sees and does is shaped and driven by his "interest in the landscape [which] is primarily economic, to foster cultivation of the verdant, 'fertile' plains" (Rodenas 157). The fact that Enrique is attuned to the lucrative potential of the island's natural resources is not in itself a signal of avarice and decadence. In consideration of the narrative's criticism of complacent creoles who rest on their laurels, Enrique's perspective may be indicative of a more enlightened mind, more fit to administer the island's natural resources that have been left up for grabs due to the self-indulgence and negligence of well-to-do Cuban creoles. The narrative would seem to suggest that Enrique's interest and lucrative appreciation of Cuba's natural resources is necessary to a certain degree; his arrival to and meticulous examination of Cuba's verdant plains could serve as a wake-up call to the slumbering creoles. The notion of Enrique's potential beneficence is quickly dissipated as the narrative depicts the avaricious motives he brings to his arranged marriage with Carlota.

Enrique, who from the age of sixteen "se hallaba en Londres enviado por su padre con el objeto de perfeccionar su educación" returns to Cuba years later "adornado de una hermosa figura y de modales dulces y agradables, con lo cual y el crédito que comenzaba a adquirir su casa no fue desechado en las reuniones más distinguidas del país" (*Sab* 55-56). It is unclear whether the narrative takes place during the same exact period as the novel's date of publication, but it remains clear that Great Britain played a central role in the development and expansion of the Industrial Revolution (which culminated around the 1840s), transforming London into a metonym of the British Empire and the aggressive capitalist spirit with which it was associated. The fact that the Otway family is English and Enrique spent the formative years of his adolescence in London is not arbitrary. This essential depiction of Enrique's education and origin transforms the previous image of Enrique as an astute surveyor of Cuba's verdant, fruitful plains into a materialistic and ruthless plunderer, eager to seize and control the island's means of production for his own capital gains.

One could argue that by comparison to his father Jorge Otway, Enrique is a more moderate version of the ruthless industrialist that the narrative condemns. Jorge's reckless investments in "empresas de comercio demasiado peligrosas" and subsequent economic losses create the circumstances that lead Enrique to agree to marry the daughter of D. Carlos de Bellavista: "todo esto tuvo presente Jorge Otway cuando eligió a Carlota para esposa de su hijo" (*Sab* 56). The fact that Enrique acquiesces with his father is not in itself a manifestation of his avarice. Enrique's response to the revelation that his betrothed was no longer the heiress of a handsome inheritance – "la fortuna, burlándose de los cálculos del codicioso inglés, había trastornado en este corto tiempo todas sus esperanzas y especulaciones [...] El testamento que constituía heredera a su esposa fue anulado justa o injustamente" (*Sab* 59-60) – that would have

recovered his family's wealth reveals, for a lack of better words, Enrique's true colors. Any semblance of true love that could have existed in Enrique's heart dissipates the moment he encounters Lady Fortune's karmic retribution:

> Lo que pasó en el alma de Enrique cuando vio destruidas en un momento las brillantes esperanzas de fortuna que fundaba en su novia, fue un secreto para todos, pues aunque fuese el joven tan codicioso como su padre era por lo menos mucho más disimulado. Su conducta no varió en lo más mínimo, ni se advirtió la más leve frialdad en sus amores [...] Carlota era acaso la única persona que ni agradecía ni notaba el aparente desinterés de su amante (*Sab* 61).

Educated in the industrial capital of Europe and well-accustomed to the lavish lifestyle made possible by his father's capitalist endeavors transforms Enrique into the archetype of "rationalist and materialist tendencies of Enlightenment and Revolutionary France" (Day 16) that Romanticism distinguishes itself from. Enrique's disillusion and "frialdad en sus amores" for Carlota voices the degree to which his rapacity takes precedence over the expression of human sentimentality. The narrative makes it clear that Enrique did in fact love Carlota – he was able to experience the passion of being authentically in love. Nonetheless, his materialist tendencies go so far as to imagine himself betrothed to a less endearing and less beautiful woman if it meant that she could restore wealth to his father's home.

> Es indudable que Enrique Otway amaba a Carlota de B… [...] Pero esta pasión no siendo única era contrastada evidentemente por otra pasión rival y a veces victoriosa: la codicia. Pensaba, pues, alejándose de su querida, en la felicidad de poseerla, y pesaba esta dicha con la de ser más rico, casándose con una mujer menos bella acaso, menos tierna, pero cuya dote pudiera restablecer el crédito de su casa decaída, y satisfacer la codicia de su padre (*Sab* 69-70).

From the start, the narrative presents a clear portrait of Enrique and Carlota: "hay almas superiores sobre la tierra, privilegiadas para el sentimiento [...] para las cuales estan reservadas las pasiones terribles, las grandes virtudes, los inmensos pesares… y que la alma de Enrique no era una de ellas" (*Sab* 68).

It is clear that Carlota's way of being-in-the-world is a better, even if not perfect, model than Enrique's. Carlota is the paragon of innocence and generosity in light of the manipulative and avaricious intentions embodied by Enrique and Jorge Otway. Carlota's presence in the plantation is essentially benevolent and desirable while Enrique's arrival is depicted as threatening and unwanted; this is illustrated by the way the natural environment itself responds to their presences. Carlota not only brings forth beauty and goodness from the space she inhabits, to a certain degree she represents the natural beauty and the bountiful resources that remain. Like the "virginal" lands, Carlota's "virgin heart"

> [Carlota] presentía el placer de viajar por un país pintoresco y magnífico con el objeto de su elección, y a la verdad nada es más grato a un corazón que sabe amar que el viajar de este modo. *La naturaleza se embellece con la presencia del objeto que se ama* y éste objeto se embellece con la naturaleza. Hay no sé qué mágica armonía entre la voz querida, el susurro de los árboles, la corriente de los arroyos y el murmullo de la brisa [my emphasis] (*Sab* 82).

Comparable to the theme "the king and the land are one" in Sir Thomas Malory's Arthurian romance, in Avellaneda's novel the natural environment reacts in a welcoming way to the benevolent presence of Carlota. Carlota brings forth beauty and goodness from the space she inhabits precisely because she aptly personifies the natural beauty and the bountiful resources of the Edenic land. Very similar to Cuba's "virginal lands", Carlota's "virgin heart" gives forth beauty and benevolence, searches for and materializes harmonious ways of being-in-the-world in which humans and nature commune peacefully together. Most importantly, as her innocence and naïveté indicate, Carlota and nature are ultimately at the mercy of those who surround them. While nature reacts harmoniously to Carlota's presence, nature reacts to the threatening presence of Enrique in a hostile way:

> La noche más profunda enlutaba ya el suelo. Aún no caía una gota de lluvia, ni la más ligera corriente de aire refrigeraba a la tierra abrasada. Reinaba un silencio temeroso en la naturaleza que parecía contemplar con profundo desaliento la cólera del cielo, y esperar

> con triste resignación el cumplimiento de sus amenazas. Sin embargo, en tan horrible noche dos hombres atrevidos atravesaban a galope aquellas sabanas abrasadas, sin el menor indicio de temor (*Sab* 69).

The personification of nature as a furious entity sending warnings of impending peril to Enrique Otway as he traverses the "fertile plains" that he is so eager to exploit conveys two ideas. First, Otway is an invasive and threatening presence in Cuba that derives from the avarice and materialistic tendencies of European industrialists. In light of Carlota's innocence and assimilation to Cuba's natural beauty and bountiful resources, Enrique's quest to exploit his arranged marriage with Carlota is also a quest to exploit Cuba's natural resources. In the passage above, "la cólera del cielo" can be interpreted as a protective instinct that comes from nature itself. I take this a step further and argue that this depiction of nature at war with Enrique necessitates the intervention of a special kind of person who shares qualities from both Enrique and Carlota but does not embody them to the same extreme the enchanted *criolla* and the avaricious Englishman do. If Carlota's sensitivity to nature and childlike innocence make her oblivious to her privileged status and the attention it attracts from avaricious and materialistic European industrialists and Enrique is that avaricious industrialist, therefore there must be a person who is astute enough who to perceive the Otways' concealed plot but sensitive enough to recognize and value Cuba's natural beauty and plentiful resources. The character who embodies both of these qualities is Sab the slave. He is the only character who is acutely alert to the threat that Enrique Otway poses in his arranged marriage with Carlota. The only reason why Sab is aware of this is because he understands the lucrative potential that Cuba's natural resources hold and the attention it attracts from foreigners. At the same time, Sab is also described as an "alma superior" who exemplifies the individual expression of emotions and values the spiritual experience that comes through communion with nature. This is the reason why he is so

protective of Carlota and wary of Enrique: he is neither governed entirely by logic and materialism to the extreme that Enrique is nor is he governed entirely by emotion and introversion to the point that Carlota is. Sab ultimately represents the perfect balance of the Enlightenment's emphasis on logic and reason and Romanticism's emphasis on individual experience and emotional expression. He models a way of being-in-the-world whose understanding of materialism and appreciation of nature, and combination of the foreign with the indigenous is conducive to the development of a collective creole identity in Cuba at the turn of the nineteenth century.

From the very beginning, Sab is described as "'un mulato perfecto'" whose status "as miscegenated national subject is meant to illustrate the prototype of an emerging Cuban nationality" (Rodenas 158). When Enrique first meets Sab, he is astonished by his ability to speak Spanish so eloquently "in spite of" his physical appearance: "era su color de un blanco amarillento con cierto fondo oscuro; su ancha frente se veia medio cubierta con mechones desiguales de un pelo negro y lustroso como las alas del cuervo; su nariz era aguileña pero sus labios gruesos y amoratados denotaban su procedencia africana" (*Sab* 40). Enrique's astonishment comes after "el extranjero rompió el silencio hablando en castellano con una pureza y facilidad que parecían desmentir su fisionomía septentional" (*Sab* 41). Later in the narrative, Enrique remarks to others that what he particularly likes about Sab is that "no tiene nada de la abyección y grosería que es común en gentes de su especie; por el contrario, tiene aire y modales muy finos y aun me atrevía a decir nobles" (*Sab* 63). The narrative's depiction of Sab speaks to the Eurocentric thinking held by certain white creoles and Europeans who regarded slaves as undignified, second-class citizens: "the Afro-Caribbean was a lazy being, unenterprising, irresponsible, and likely to acquire all sorts of social defects" (Benítez-Rojo

Repeating 66). The portrayal of Sab questions that racial prejudice through his noble and elevated manners in light of his complexion as being indicative of being a second-class citizen. To a certain degree, the narrative confirms these Eurocentric assumptions because it presents an individual who transgresses the "limits" of his "race". My interest lies in the way this Eurocentric depiction of Sab brings into relief the tension between the seemingly incompatible qualities represented by Carlota and Enrique respectively. What appears as problematic and ultimately destructive through Carlota and Enrique's relationship – where the union of Carlota's unrestrained emotional expression with Enrique's logical and materialist thinking would have pernicious consequences for Carlota – is tempered and transformed into a beneficial association of qualities in Sab the slave. Sab associates the "fisionomía septentional", which under Enrique's gaze connotes a set of lazy, unenterprising social defects, with "modales muy finos" which connotes the entrepreneurial and educated qualities of the elite social class of Europeans with whom Enrique identifies himself. The result is a unique and ultimately "superior" kind of person: not fitting into the stereotype of a lazy laborer but also not quite a part of the social class of land-owning creoles, let alone European merchants, Sab achieves a delicate balance of two distinct sets of qualities. This balance of seemingly incompatible qualities concretized in the character Sab lays the foundation for the way of being-in-the-world I identify as "habitation". In observation of Carlota's innocence on one polar opposite and Enrique's manipulative plot on the other, the reader turns their gaze towards the middle of the triptych and locates within Sab a balance of qualities that is conducive to the development of a collective, creole Cuban identity.

Sab models this ideal way of being-in-the-world in the way he plays out polarities in the narrative without gravitating too far in either direction. From the very beginning, Sab clearly establishes that he is loyal to Carlota: "desde mi infancia fui escriturado a la señorita Carlota: soy

esclavo suyo, y quiero vivir y morir en su servicio" (*Sab* 46). What he conceals from everyone is how much he loves her and how desperately he wishes he could be her husband. By consequence, Sab's knowledge that Carlota is in love with Enrique raises concerns and a strong animosity towards Enrique. As he accompanies Enrique in his journey to Havana, Sab scrutinizes Enrique in painful silence: "a la luz repercutida de los relámpagos veíanse sus ojos fijos, siempre fijos en su compañero, como si quisiera registrar en ellos los senos más recónditos de su corazón" (*Sab* 70). As fate would have it Enrique is injured as a lightning bolt strikes a nearby tree, flinging him off his horse and knocking him unconscious. At this precise moment, Sab is presented with a test of character: should he leave Enrique or should he rescue him?

> Helo aquí a mis pies, sin voz, sin conocimiento, a este hombre aborrecido. Una voluntad le reduciría a la nada, y esa voluntad es la mía… ¡la mía, pobre esclavo de quien él no sospecha que tenga una alma superior a la suya… capaz de amar, capaz de aborrecer… una alma que supiera ser grande y virtuosa y que ahora puede ser criminal! He aquí tendido a ese hombre que no debe levantarse más! [...] Porque muriendo él no conocerá nunca Carlota cuán indigno era de su amor entusiasta, de su amor de mujer y de virgen [...] pero ¿debo yo dejarle la vida? ¿Le permitiré que profane a ese ángel de inocencia y de amor? ¿Le arrancaré de los brazos de la muerte para ponerle en los suyos? (*Sab* 71)

In addition to the disdain Enrique shows towards Sab since the beginning by his astonishment of Sab's "modales muy finos", Enrique by comparison to Sab does not deserve Carlota's love and adulation… Should he rescue Enrique, he would put him back in Carlota's arms and would lead to the "desecration" of her innocence. Should Sab act according to Enrique's stereotype – namely the one that precludes that as a slave he is incapable of feeling anger and love, unable to be a hero or being a criminal? Or should he prove Enrique wrong, leave him there, and protect Carlota from falling in the arms of the wrong man?... All of these thoughts cross Sab's mind as he looks at Enrique laying on the ground. Enrique's helplessness brings Sab back to reality and ultimately leads him to choose the path of reason: he had made a promise to Carlota to protect Enrique.

> un débil gemido que exhalo Otway hizo estremecer al esclavo. Dejó caer su cabeza que sostenía, retrocedió algunos pasos, cruzó los brazos sobre su pecho, agitado de una tempestad más horrible que la de la naturaleza; miró al cielo [...] miró a Otway en silencio y sacudió con violencia su cabeza empapada por la lluvia, rechinando unos contra otros sus dientes de marfil. Luego se acercó precipitadamente al herido y era evidente que terminaban sus vacilaciones y que había tomado una resolución decidida (*Sab* 72).

His loyalty to Carlota and sense of humanity emerge as a counterbalance to his individual experience of anger towards Enrique and protective instinct for Carlota. In other terms, Sab's level-headedness moderates the contrasting intense emotionality. Unlike Carlota, Sab is acutely aware of his status as a slave and the potential consequences of his actions: he does *not* have the luxury to base his behavior and actions entirely on his individual experience. While he does not negate the validity of his frustration of being an "alma superior" tragically born as a miscegenated slave, he does not allow this frustration and anger to govern the way he acts. He embodies ideals that are celebrated both by the Enlightenment and Romanticism without defining himself exclusively by one or the other.

Sab's ability to temper or mitigate his individual experience of human emotion by resorting to logic and reason in itself is not a quality that is unique to him and no other character in the narrative. For example, Enrique is able to mitigate between his love towards Carlota and his avarice by not giving into his emotions or his materialistic tendencies: "agitado e indeciso en esta elección se reconvenía a sí mismo de no ser bastante codicioso para sacrificar su amor a su interés, o bastante generoso para posponer su conveniencia a su amor" (*Sab* 70). Enrique resolves his indecision by not allowing either extreme to govern his actions… So how is Sab different from Enrique? Sab's actions not only model a balance of intense emotional experience and logical reasoning, Sab manifests this balance in the way he interacts with and shapes his

environment. Once again, through Sab's relation with his environment, the narrative shifts the reader's gaze towards the center: the interior of Cuba.

> No había en Puerto-Príncipe en la época de nuestra historia, grande afición a los jardines: apenas se conocían [...] Sin embargo, Sab, que sabía cuánto amaba las flores su joven señora, había cultivado vecino a la casa de Bellavista un pequeño y gracioso jardín [...] *No dominaba el gusto inglés ni el francés* en aquel lindo jardinillo: Sab no había consultado sino sus caprichos al formarle. Era un recinto de poca extensión defendido del ardiente viento del sur por triples hileras de altas cañas de hermoso verde oscuro, conocidas por el país con el nombre de pitos, que batidas ligeramente por la brisa formaban un murmullo dulce y melancólico (*Sab* 77) [my emphasis].

By comparison to Carlota and Enrique, Sab is the only character in the narrative who takes the active role of being an *architect* of his environment. Childlike and innocent, the depiction of Carlota's place in her environment is that of an enchanted occupant, often dazzled and overwhelmed by the natural beauty of the surrounding landscape. Neither a menace nor a governess, Carlota is simply a fortunate beneficiary of that edenic setting. On the other hand, governed by avarice and materialism, Enrique's arrival to this environment is unwelcome and pernicious. Tantalized by the abundant natural resources and amused by the complacency and idleness of the wealthy, land-owning class of Cuban creoles, Enrique poses the threat of exploitation and depletion of the natural resources of this space. Sab's place in this space is different. I choose the word *architect* to describe Sab because, as illustrated by the passage above, he demonstrates a careful consideration of both the practical and the aesthetic, the functional and the beautiful, the material and the spiritual. During a time where the predominant form of land-shaping responded to the demand for agriculture of sugarcane and other cash crops, Sab emerges as one of the few individuals who shapes his environment in a nonconventional way: he creates a miniature Eden. Right in the midst of the Bellavista plantation, a site of agricultural production, Sab plants a garden whose sole purpose is to bring delight and pleasure to his mistress Carlota. The architecture of this garden, furthermore, concretizes Sab's ability to

associate distinct objects without gravitating towards any polarity. Sab's garden is not only beautiful to admire, it is also functional: the rows of sugarcane planted on one side serve as a barrier to obstruct the "ardiente viento del sur". The combination of indigenous species of plants such as "la clavellina" along with Eurasian plants such as "el jazmín, la modesta violeta y el orgulloso girasol" (*Sab* 77-79) displays an elegant tapestry of both old and new world flora, indicating a certain impartiality in the architect's design. Perhaps the line that demonstrates Sab's neutrality vis-à-vis the foreign and the autochthonous is "no dominaba el gusto inglés ni el francés". Without defining the exact characteristics of an English or a French garden, the connotation of English gardens is the "romantic" style while the connotation of French gardens is the "neo-classical" style. Confronted by the "romantic" style – an unstructured approach that favors the "wild" the "natural" state – on one polar opposite and the "neo-classical" style – governed clear lines, geometric shapes, and symmetry – on the other, Sab chooses neither. Instead, he creates a garden according to his own instincts and preferences.

The figure of the environmental architect is representative only of one Sab's modalities. To recall Sab's first conversation with Enrique, his official role in the Bellavista plantation is that of a *mayoral*: "¿Conque eres esclavo de don Carlos? – Tengo el honor de ser su mayoral en este ingenio" (*Sab* 44). To be given and carry out the role of a foreman of a sugar plantation implies that Sab must be skilled, efficient, and possess a certain level of education and experience in the management of human labor and agricultural production. He must be, in a general sense, an exceptional laborer. These implied characteristics of Sab are confirmed as he explains to Enrique that

> con [Carlota] aprendí a leer y a escribir, porque nunca quiso recibir lección alguna sin que estuviese a su lado de su pobre mulato. Por ella cobré afición por la lectura, sus libros y aun los de su padre han estado siempre a mi disposición [...] Por mi propia elección fui

> algunos años calesero, luego quise dedicarme al campo, y hace dos años que asisto en este ingenio (*Sab* 46).

Educated by the side of his mistress, Sab acquired access to resources early on that would prepare and lead him to become the educated and diligent laborer in his adulthood. Diametrically opposed to the complacent and idle criollos who rest in their laurels, Sab exemplifies a way of being-in-the-world that serves as a model for all Cuban creoles. He carries out the role of a mayoral because he *decided* to dedicate himself to the occupation of being the steward of Cuba's natural resources and the human labor that cultivate those resources. Even after exercising in another occupation as a shoe-maker, he turns back to the interior of Cuba, the site where he can watch over the production of natural resources and also preserve the island's natural beauty. The fact that Sab becomes a *mayoral* in part by his own choice is represented as a positive attribute in the narrative. While duties the *mayoral* of an ingenio include overseeing human labor and carrying out punishments, Sab is described as a "benevolent" capataz: "encantados los negros [...] [celebraban] la humanidad de D. Carlos y el celo y benignidad de su mayoral Sab" (*Sab* 79).

The underlying precondition that makes Sab a model for Cuban creoles is his unwavering love for Carlota *and* Cuba itself. His loyalty to Carlota, dedication to the cultivation of natural resources, benevolent overseeing of slave labor, as well as the creation of sites that value and preserve natural beauty collectively constitute what I describe as, in general terms, Sab's "love language". Sab strives for recognition and acceptance more than any other character in the narrative. However, he is precluded from this recognition and acceptance by his status: "no puedo llamarme amigo suyo. Pertenezco – prosiguió con sonrisa amarga — a aquella raza desventurada sin derechos de hombres… soy mulato y esclavo" (*Sab* 43-44). In response to the interdiction placed upon him at birth, Sab seeks to generate his own belonging to and integration into Cuban society which is represented by his aforementioned "love language" and, more

specifically, his unwavering love for Carlota. There are multiple passages in the narrative where Carlota is compared to or described as a natural element and where nature itself is personified as a female body. In one passage, Sab describes his longing for Carlota's love and validation by comparing her to the "clavellina" flower referenced earlier: "su lindo rostro de alabastro se inclinaba sobre mi rostro moreno; como la blanca clavellina que se dobla sobre la parda peña del arroyo" (*Sab* 96). During their journey to the region of Cubitas, body parts such as "senos" and "espaldas" are used to describe the topography of that landscape:

> los árboles y volaban sobre la tierra, abiertos sus *senos* brillantes como foco de luz. Solo interrumpe el silencio solemne de la medianoche el murmullo melancólico que formaban las corrientes del Tínima, que se deslizaba a *espaldas* de los cañaverales entre azules y blancas piedras, para regar las flores silvestres que adornaban sus márgenes solitarias (*Sab* 130) [my emphasis].

Perhaps the most salient example of the parallelism between Carlota and nature is a moment in the narrative when Sab's gaze goes back and forth between Carlota and the landscape, as if he is unable to distinguish one from the other. To a certain degree, in Sab's mind, both Carlota and Cuba are one in the same – the *queen* and the land are one: "Sab seguía de cerca a Carlota y contemplaba alternativamente al campo y a la doncella, como si los comparase: había en efecto cierta armonía entre aquella naturaleza y aquella mujer, ambas tan jovenes y tan hermosas" (*Sab* 97). Sab's love for Carlota is interchangeable with his love for Cuba, they are one in the same. His instinct to watch out for the well-being of Carlota and protect her from harm as well as the care and meticulous attention he gives to her happiness by cultivating small gardens is a small-scale representation of Sab's protective instinct and love for Cuba itself.

No other moment in the narrative demonstrates Sab's unwavering love for his mistress better than Sab's voluntary decision to let Carlota marry Enrique. Sab is aware of the disillusionment and heartbreak that Carlota would experience if Sab were to disclose Enrique's

real identity to her; this reason is enough for Sab to let Carlota go. For him, having loved Carlota even if that love was not reciprocated is satisfaction enough for him:

> El cielo puso a Carlota sobre la tierra, para que yo gozase en su plenitud la ventura suprema de amar con entusiasmo: no importa que haya amado solo: ¡mi llama ha sido pura, inmensa, inextinguible! No importa que haya padecido, pues he amado a Carlota: [...] sería una barbarie decirle –ese ídolo de tu amor es un miserable incapaz de comprenderte y amarte. ¡No, nunca!, quédese con sus ilusiones, que yo respetaré con religiosa veneración… ¡Cásese con Enrique, y sea feliz! (*Sab* 147).

As the object of his love and adoration, Carlota essentially becomes a metonym of Cuba; when Sab addresses Carlota he is addressing Cuba. Following this line of thought, the same phrases that Sab directs to Carlota – "quédese con sus ilusiones" and "sea feliz" – echo and are redirected to Carlota's more abstract counterpart. In Sab's letter to Teresa, he combines the elegiac with the hopeful, which creates an ambiguity with regards to whom the letter is addressed and if that address is a lamentation of a paradise lost or an admonition to the living. Sab speaks posthumously, leaving the reader with the interpretive space to reflect, find solace, and fall in love with Cuba in the way Sab did. In Teresa's words to Carlota:

> acaso no hallarás nada grande y bello en que descansar tu corazón fatigado. Entonces tendrás ese papel: ese papel es toda un alma [...] el aroma de un corazón que *se moría sin marchitarse*. Las lágrimas que te arranque no serán venenosas, *los pensamientos que te inspire no serán mezquinos*. Mientras leas ese papel *creerás como yo en el amor y en la virtud*, y cuando el ruido de los vivos fatigue tu alma, refúgiate en la memoria de los muertos (*Sab* 186) [my emphasis].

Sab's posthumous address is a love letter to Cuba from her miscegenated lover, the "prototype of an emerging Cuban nationality" (Rodenas 158) that she took for granted and rejected. This rejection did cost her something. Represented in Carlota's decision to marry Enrique, the cost of this rejection was a life of misery: "aquella atmósfera mercantil y especuladora, aquellos cuidados incesantes de los intereses materiales marchitaban las bellas ilusiones de su joven corazón" (*Sab* 182). With this bitter realization in mind, the reader searches for a glimmer of

hope in what Sab leaves behind. Through the phrase "no he podido encontrar entre los hombres la gran armonía que Dios ha establecido en la naturaleza" (*Sab* 189), Sab conveys the hope of the possibility of restorative justice to be carried out by Cuba.

As he states at the beginning of the letter, "yo acepto esta nueva prueba y agoto, sin hacer un gesto de repugnancia" (*Sab* 187); Sab's letter is not a complaint or condemnation. It is an invitation

> aunque esclavo yo soy he amado todo lo bello y lo grande, y he sentido que mi alma se elevaba sobre mi destino. ¡Oh! Si, yo he tenido un grande y hermoso orgullo: el esclavo ha dejado volar libre su pensamiento, y su pensamiento subía más allá de las nubes en que se forma el rayo (*Sab* 190).

Sab knows he surpassed the misfortune of his status: his experience went above and beyond the circumstances that placed him at such a disadvantage. Based exclusively on his individual experience, irrespective of the injustice and exploitation surrounding him, Sab "transcended" his condition. In his own words, "en mi mente se desarrollaba, a la manera de un magnífico panorama, un mundo de opulencia y de grandeza, y en mis insomnios devorantes pasaban delante de mi coronas de laurel y mantos de púrpura" (*Sab* 191). Sab recognizes what he experienced as "transcendance" was produced by the degree to which he aligned with solipsism. On the exterior, in the real world, he experiences something quite different. He witnesses the kind of harmony that the natural world provided and at the same time Cubans' failure to imitate the model provided by the natural world to create the same sense of harmony and justice for people like him. The steps he made towards attaining an "elevated" state of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual enlightenment from the vantage of his individual experience were halted and oftentimes pushed backwards when externalized in the material world. There is a disconnect between what experiences individually and what he experiences interpersonally. This is precisely what Sab laments the most:

> si son los hombres los que me han formado este destino, si ellos han cortado las alas que Dios concedió a mi alma [...] si ellos me han dicho ¿eres fuerte?, pues sé debil: ¿eres altivo?, pues sé humilde [...] ¿tienes inmensas facultades de amar?, pues sofócalas, porque no debes amar a ningun objeto bello y puro digno de inspirarte amor [...] Si son los hombres los que me han impuesto este horrible destino, ellos son los que deben temer al presentarse delante de Dios [...] ¿Saben ellos lo que pude haber sido? (*Sab* 193)

Irrespective of the degree to which Sab may have made himself believe he was "one of them", Cubans never actually accepted him as one of them. No matter how much he tried to embody and manifest qualities and virtues that Cubans idealized and valued, he could never earn their approval or convince them that there was nothing erroneous about his attempt to inscribe himself in their society. What Sab describes is a dissonance that resulted *not* from a personal flaw from his side. On the contrary, the dissonance is the result of Cubans themselves being unable to understand their own flawed understanding of these ideas and virtues. Their understanding and application of principles such as materialism and logic and reason was not as nuanced and sophisticated as Sab's. In the case of Cuban creoles, in the words of Jorge Otway, they "saben mejor aparentar riquezas que adquirirlas o conservarlas" (*Sab* 83). Unlike Sab, they lack the skill and intelligence to administer their abundant natural resources to preserve and multiply their wealth. So when Sab did attempt to manifest and apply his skill and intelligence, Cubans would respond with "¿eres altivo?, pues sé humilde". The same flaw was reproduced in their lack of appreciation and steps taken to preserve the natural beauty of Cuba. In a context where the industrialized production of sugar by means of the ingenio took precedence over the preservation of nature, Sab emerges as one of the few individuals who cultivates a garden, a miniature Eden, right in the middle of Bellavista. In response to Sab's more sophisticated and sensitive approach to the cultivation of natural resources and preservation of natural beauty, Cubans would respond "¿tienes inmensas facultades de amar?, pues sofócalas". The only individual who modeled a way of being-in-the-world that used both logic and emotional expression, materialism and

compassion, reason and love was cast aside, put down, and alienated from Cuba, his true love who was never able to reciprocate the same for him. As such, Sab decides to take his bow and retreat. Here, the reader hears the echo from the words he directed to Carlota: "quédese con sus ilusiones" and "sea feliz". Through his death, Cuba will never know how much more he could have done and who he could have become. Still, he leaves Cuba with a sense of hope: "sí, el sol de la justicia no está lejos. La tierra le espera para rejuvenecer a su luz: los hombres llevarán un sello divino, y el ángel de la poesía radiará sus rayos sobre el nuevo reinado de la inteligencia" (*Sab* 195). Sometime in the near future, Sab makes his last wish. His hope is that the same harmony and beauty he experienced individually and observed in nature – personified by the figure of "the angel of poetry" – will enlighten those fortunate inhabitants and engender a collective Cuban identity – represented by "el nuevo reinado de la inteligencia".

Part III: The Plantation, Spanish Romanticism, and the Generation of the Cuban Creole

Sab plays an unquestionable role in the collective efforts to attempt to ward off and dispel the fear of a violent slave revolt. The way this novel plays out the theme of the "noble savage" represented in Sab the mulato slave becomes a plea not to abolish slavery as an institution necessarily but rather endorse a benign, less-severe form of slavery. Early in the narrative, the reader is acutely aware that Sab was treated differently: "jamás he sufrido el trato duro que se da generalmente a los negros, ni he sido condenado a largos y fatigosos trabajos" (*Sab* 45). In light of this, Sab's unique treatment in the Bellavista plantation becomes a precondition for his exceptional way of being-in-the-world. When Don Carlos de Bellavista grants Sab his emancipation and promises to show him "los gajes proporcionados a tus trabajos, con los cuales puedas tu mismo irte formando una existencia independiente", Sab "[se arrojó] a los pies de su

amo, cuya mano cubrió de besos y lágrimas" (*Sab* 114). Once again, his master's generosity and benevolence become preconditions that cultivate this gratitude and humility in Sab's behavior. One could argue that the novel ultimately insists upon the definitive abolition of slavery for, as the narrative demonstrates, Sab's cursed status of a mulatto slave is precisely what leads him to abandon any hope of acceptance from Carlota and Cuba altogether. The only character who ever voices this hope for a universal emancipation is Carlota herself: "cuando yo sea la esposa de Enrique […] ningún infeliz respirará a mi lado el aire emponzoñado de la esclavitud. Daremos libertad a todos nuestros negros. ¿Qué importa ser menos ricos? ¿Seremos por eso menos dichosos?" (*Sab* 80). However, in light of her childlike innocence and obliviousness to the role materialism plays in her comfortable and privileged lifestyle, Carlota's comment comes across more as a demonstration of her delusional way of thinking. It is very likely she has no idea how the disappearance of slave labor would affect her privileged existence as the daughter of a wealthy, land-owning family. Within her limited capacity to understand materialism and its significance in her life, it is likely she does not know if she and Enrique would become "menos dichosos". The fact that Sab experienced a more "benign" form of slavery under the custody of Don Carlos and Sab himself becomes a wise and compassionate mayoral partially as a result of this unique upbringing points to another, more nuanced idea. This idea is that the novel articulates the idealization and celebration of a specific historical moment during which the small-scale plantation and a more nuanced and diversified form of slave labor was employed in the Spanish Caribbean islands. That historical moment is situated approximately a century before the publication of this novel, sometime before Cuba became the primary producer and exporter of sugar in the triangular trade as a result of the Haitian Revolution.

The representation of a Cuban patriotic narrative in *Sab* hinges on the idea that a different, more gentle relationship to the slave and a gentler, better kind of colonialism is necessary. On one level, *Sab* represents a better kind of colonialism through the preservation of the natural beauty and plentiful resources of Cuba. The shift that took place at the beginning of the nineteenth century had deleterious effects on the land itself. In *The West Indies*, David Watts argues that as a result of the Seven Years War during the mid-eighteenth century, social stratifications in the Caribbean eased somewhat, leading to "a growing creolism [...] which had the effect of loosening the region's cultural, and to some extent its legal ties with the European governments" (233-234). This description resonates with *Sab*'s depiction of the small-scale plantation where the novel takes place. This description resonates with Manuel Moreno Fraginals's description of the Cuban "sacarocracia" of the eighteenth century: an astute landowning class with a developed sense of pride in being a "productor azucarero cubano" (109). In Watts's description, this landowning class also possessed a certain amount of freedom in their enterprise of sugar production. Therefore, the way the oligarchy exploited the land and its natural resources during this time was partially determined by the kind of commercial system being used by Europe. The commercial system being used at that time was mercantilism. Following the American Revolution and the Haitian Revolution, Europe transitioned from the mercantilist system, which indirectly favored the landowning class, to a free-trade system to manage the West Indies, which included free-trade agreements that were unfavorable for the landowning class: "these periods represent a continuing transition from a simple and essentially preferential, to a much more […] disadvantageous free-trade commercial system, the main financial gains increasingly being made by home-country merchants as time went on" (Watts 258). This transition is important because it takes place at the same time the large-scale, hierarchical

plantation system began to replace the former plantation system that Cuban criollos had semi-independently developed and in which they had prided themselves. The development of the large-scale, hierarchical plantation to Cuba was alarming for many reasons, for one it was accompanied with an exponential increase in contraband slaves from neighboring Caribbean islands which led to a phobia towards Afro-Caribbean people and culture.[2] However, the most drastic change was exponential growth of the sugar industry. This change "arose from the need to make production units ever more effective in the light of increasingly severe market competition and higher costs" (Watts 384). As a result, it "became much more difficult to sustain at former levels; and indeed the entire social fabric on which the plantation-slave system rested commenced to crumble" (Watts 382). The exploitation of the land and its natural resources increased to such a degree that not only the former small-scale plantation system became more difficult to sustain, the sociocultural relations that had been developed within that former plantation system also began to crumble. In addition to the dissolution of the social fabric they had developed, the creole oligarchy also witnessed the severe consequences on the environment. Despite the economic benefits this large-scale plantation system had brought to Europe, "this was only achieved at a substantial cost to the environment", such as soil erosion and extinction of native plants (Watts 447). One could argue that *Sab* articulates this crisis in the psychology of the creole oligarchy by depicting Sab's meticulous care for and preservation of indigenous plants in the novel.

[2] In his analysis of Alejandro Tapia y Rivera's play *La cuarterona*, Stephen Silverstein argues that due to the exponential increase in the importation of African slaves during the period of 1820 and 1873, "Cuba's augmented slave population induced a 'black peril' that [...] hovered 'over the spirits' of white criollos [...]. Cubans remained in a constant state of crisis throughout most of the nineteenth century, distressed that they too would experience the 'destruction, murder, and rape by 'African savages,' which was described in gory detail' in booklets and pamphlets by surviving plantation owners of the neighboring Saint-Domingue, many of whom fled to Cuba" (Silverstein 124).

The early success of the Cuban sugar industry was made possible largely due to the use of slavery. Nonetheless, Fraginals argues that the role of slavery in this early period was different from the role of slavery *after* the Haitian Revolution. Cubans resorted to slavery due to a scarcity of salaried laborers: "fueron esclavistas porque carecieron de asalariados, porque la esclavitud fue la única solución posible a la inicial expansión azucarera" (Fraginals 214). Furthermore, he argues that in this early plantation system, the slave was often recognized as a co-worker by his master: "en muchos ingenios se reconoció una mínima propiedad del esclavo, quien cultivó la tierra y comerció sus productos con el propio amo" (Fraginals 213). Among the features of *El ingenio* that Fraginals has been criticized for, such as the fact that "Fraginals has depended heavily on the various sugar production manuals and pamphlets of the period even though he is often critical of them" (Schwarz 797), one of the most salient is how Fraginals downplays the brutality of slavery during the period of the late seventeenth century to the eighteenth century:

> In order to emphasize the increasing brutality of the Cuban slave regime in its response to increasing production, the author creates a somewhat roseate view of earlier plantation slavery in Cuba. Studies of other sugar economies using similar technology (Mexico, Brazil, Peru) indicate that conditions may have been far worse than Moreno Fraginals assume (Schwarz 798)

Schwarz argues that Fraginals depicts a more benign image of slavery during the eighteenth century in order to support the argument that the brutality of slavery in the island of Cuba was the result of an increase in population of slaves during the nineteenth century. In downplaying the brutality of slavery in Cuba in the period before the Haitian Revolution and the ramifications that resulted from that revolution, Fraginals is able to depict an image of a more benign, more calculated use of the institution of slavery by the elites of the "sacarocracia". Without the exponential increase in demand of sugar production and the concurrent increase in the importation of slaves from neighboring Caribbean islands, Fraginals argues that the sugar

economy from the late seventeenth century to the eighteenth represented a more positive, formative period in the history of Cuba. In short, it is possible that the brutality of slavery in Cuba worsened following the Haitian Revolution. As Schwarz points out, while Fraginals's depiction does not definitively prove that eighteenth century slavery less brutal, it is useful to make the distinction between the eighteenth and the nineteenth century in that the former was probably a smaller-scale, less hierarchical system. This is supported by the fact that "the majority of slaves did not work in the sugar plantation—they were distributed among leather making, public works, domestic service" (Benitez-Rojo *Repeating* 68). The Cuban economy had not yet shifted all of its production efforts to sugar in this less hierarchical system; labor was more evenly distributed across different sectors of production. Cuban *criollos* developed unique, administrative strategies during this early period that they believed were more "honorable" and worthy to be preserved.

It was during the period from 1821-1850, when Cuba "eventually replaced Saint Domingue as the main sugar producer in the Caribbean" (Fischer 3), when the shift from the former to the latter plantation system took place. The increase in the demand of the exportation of sugar led to several changes, one the first major changes was the expansion of the sugar plantation: "the larger plantation offered the advantage of lower unit costs" (Williams 121). Along with the increase in size of the plantation, there was a corresponding increase in the importation of slaves (largely through contraband), which resulted in a maximum exploitation of the slave's labor (Fraginals 226). In the *ingenio* of the 1840s, "la jornada de trabajo se extendió hasta el extremo biológicamente posible para que el esclavo rindiera un periodo de vida útil previamente calculado" (Fraginals 284). Furthermore, in this large-scale plantation system, "el negro desagregado de su comunidad de origen y esclavizado, perdió todo atributo tradicional o lo

mantuvo clandestino" (Fraginals 301). In this new system, not only was the slave exploited to the maximum human limit, but the slave also became more alienated from the rest of society. I argue that in this period, the distinction between "exploitation" and the former administrative methods that were more "calculated" became more evident. The large-scale, hierarchical plantation system of the nineteenth century introduced a whole new "set of conditions that were inescapable" to certain Caribbean peoples, including the *criollo* oligarchy: the small-scale, less hierarchical plantation system would soon disappear. The large-scale, hierarchical Plantation of the nineteenth century made it increasingly difficult for some *criollos* to develop a sense of "place" given that the dominant "zoning" methods had become increasingly hostile to small-scale plantations.

Sab may have served as a mouthpiece for the Cuban oligarchy to endorse the continued use of slave labor, or at least, promote a restoration of a previous version of slavery. After all, one of the major changes that resulted from the transition to the new plantation system in the period of 1821-1850 was an exponential increase in the importation of slaves, there was an overabundance of slaves (Fraginals 226). This drastic increase in slave labor enabled the expansion of "the onslaught of large sugar manufacture that riddled the western provinces—the main sugar-producing regions of Havana and Matanzas" (Rodenas 155), which, as portrayed in the novel, is an encroaching threat upon the smaller plantations that the narrative celebrates so fervently. The depiction of Sab as "racially black, yet […] as 'elevated' and 'noble,' the embodiment of a 'superior' spirit" (Rodenas 155) conveys the conflicted desire to hold onto some version of slavery but at the same time treat the slave in a different, gentler way. Furthermore, The *criollos* of the 19th century found themselves "without proper genealogy to root them in the Land," as such, they pursued "a generative rather than a genealogical claim"

(Sommer 15). If Sab is representative of this pursuit of a "generative" claim, *Sab* portrays the "failure to bring the racial (love) affair to a happy ending accounts for the tragedy […] in which the racially amalgamated hero (also Cuba) is desperate for the love (and legitimacy) of his creole mistress could give him" (Sommer 21). Following this line of thought, Sab posits the idea that if and when a collective Cuban identity is to be consolidated, it is only be possible through some kind of racial integration: a symbolic marriage between the *criollo* and the *mulato* that unfortunately had not been achieved yet. The symbolic marriage between the criollo and the mulato can serve as a metonym for the symbolic marriage of Romanticism and the Enlightenment, a tension that is central in the development of this narrative.

According to Alexander Semilov, Avellaneda's work is simultaneously symptomatic and representative "de la complejidad del proceso que lleva a la formación del romanticismo en España" and this process was marked by the "búsqueda de una expresión nueva, independiente de los postulados normativos del clasicismo" (60). To speak of the significance of romanticism in the novel *Sab* is to speak of the complex circumstances that led to the development of romanticism in Europe, specifically in Spain. The origins and existence of a *Spanish* romanticism is fraught with ambiguity. The difficulties that surround Spanish romanticism derive from an "origen intencionado con el objetivo último de introducir confusión, imprecisión y complejidad" (Manrique). In sum, the misconception that obscures the origins of Spanish romanticism is that

> en un determinado momento histórico aparece una forma de ser psicológica (una forma de ser que podemos llamar romántica) que no encaja con la realidad y con las tendencias de un momento histórico concreto o, en otras palabras, que no encaja con los ideales del grupo político que está en el poder (Manrique).

It is precisely this notion – that romanticism was inherently *incongruous* or *incompatible* with the aesthetics and ideologies that were prevalent at the moment in history – that obscures the

origins of Spanish Romanticism. This misconception that Spanish romanticism was an exceptional case, an anomaly that stood apart from every other ideology and aesthetic tendency *prevents* us from seeing the ways in which this movement actually derived and borrowed from its antecedents and contemporaries. The fact of the matter is that Spanish romanticism was intimately connected to an external repertoire of influences: "el romanticismo español debe entenderse como un fenómeno que no hace su aparición de forma aislada sino como un movimiento fuertemente determinado por las influencias recibidas del exterior y en concreto y sobre todo por las influencias procedentes de Alemania, Inglaterra y Francia" (Manrique). There is certainly an imitative quality in romantic literature and it would be impossible to make the claim that Spanish romantics were impervious to German, English, and French influence. However, unlike the French or German romantics, in the case of Spanish romanticism, the position in which Spain found itself in relation to the rest of Europe led to the *importation* and *internalization* of foreign images – namely from Germany – of Spain itself to bring about the ideological changes that were characteristic of of romanticism in places like England, Germany, and France. Simply put, the position in which Spain found itself in relation to the rest of Europe was that she herself had not undergone the socio-economic, political, and philosophical changes that had led other countries like England, Germany, and France to question whether modernity had gone too far. Since the eighteenth century, there was an idea that Spain was "intrinsically romantic" which was partially based on "the fallacious notion that certain characteristics of Spanish civilization found valuable by the German romantics and others made Spain herself romantic" (King 4). This idea of a "romantic" Spain derives from specific images created by German romantics that were based largely on literary Spanish texts of the medieval period, such as those represented by Miguel de Cervantes. However, to assume that the inception of this

"intrinsically romantic" Spain in the eighteenth century was based entirely on reappropriated tropes from the Spanish medieval period elides an important aspect of Spanish society. While the ideals of the Enlightenment spread across countries like England, France, and Germany during the eighteenth century, it could not be said that the same movement took place in Spain. The fact of the matter is that

> the Enlightenment had shallow roots in Spain. To resist, perhaps better, to ignore the Enlightenment was to behave in a Spanish, not a Romantic fashion. It was not that the Spaniards were trying to replace rule of human reason; they could not, broadly speaking, use it [...] Spain's eighteenth century is the expression is the expression of the Spaniard's uneasy relationship with his French ideas (King 5)

To argue that the idea that Spain was "intrinsically romantic" derives solely from literary representations like those of Cervantes overlooks the fact that Spanish society exhibited a comparative lack of ideological changes that were taking place across Europe by means of the Enlightenment. Transformations such as the French Revolution is just one example of how the Enlightenment led to radical change in European civilizations. During that same period, Spain struggled to use the rule of human reason to bring about radical change while that same concept was leading the third estate to overthrow the monarchy and the nobility on the other side of the Pyrenees. To the German romantics, Spain was the romantic imaginary of Cervantes. In light of this comparative lack of transformation in Spain, the Spanish turned outward to these foreign images as a mirror: *is this "espagne romantique" really who we are?* Confronted by "foreign representations of Spain and its culture, the Spanish Romantics came to see themselves and their civilization in the mirror of an image that was originally created as an other" (Saglia 133-134). Due to Spain's lack of transformation in comparison to her sister kingdoms, does this mean that Spanish romantics simply co-opted their own ideologies and aesthetics for those offered by the ones found in German romanticism? Edmund King begins to answer this question by

acknowledging that there *was* indeed a comparative lack of radical change in Spanish society over the eighteenth century whereby a movement like romanticism would have resulted:

> It would seem likely that for a culture to turn Romantic it would have to go through a metaphysical crisis of the nature and magnitude of the crisis experienced in non-Spanish Europe at the end of the eighteenth century, or else, in the absence of a crisis natively produced, the culture would have to absorb it by deliberate and hungry importation. The latter process is the one by which Spain acquired some measure of the genuinely Romantic spirit (King 9).

In the absence of a "metaphysical crisis" like the French Revolution that served as a catalyst for the development of Romanticism, Spain simply imported and internalized the Romantic spirit represented in those foreign images of the "espagne romantique". However, the only reason those foreign images were effective in the production of a Spanish Romanticism was because they were compatible with the concepts of the neoclassical, Golden Age period: "foreign images of Spain *co-operated* with already existing concepts and provided an outlet for them" (Saglia 137). Spanish literature of the Golden Age already possessed ideologies and aesthetics that were represented in the German romantics' idealized Spain. When Augstín Durán's *Discruso* in 1828 announced the "official" beginning of *Spanish* Romanticism, it

> marked the "end" of Neoclassical poetics but [also] represented a development of the principles of Spanish drama of the Golden Age that was an investment in the perspectival discourses of the Schlegels [...] Durán's traditionalist version of Romanticism sees in Golden Age drama [...]: individualism, Christian ethics, spiritual freedom, monarchy, creative liberty and especially a fusion of diverse cultural influences, above all the inclusion of the Hispano-Arabic civilization (Saglia 135-134)

In other words, Spain's reception of these foreign images made it realize that it possessed the Romantic spirit all along even though it never underwent a radical change like the French Revolution.

Similarly, *Sab* represents a quest to find and import distinct sets of images and ideologies to bring about a crisis of nature that would help develop a collective identity represented in the

racially amalgamated hero of Sab the mulatto. Among the many circumstances that may have delayed the experience of an existential crisis in Cuba, the continued use of slavery is the main obstacle Cubans faced and prevented them from experiencing the "crisis of nature", a crisis that had already arrived to her North American neighbor and her Antillean counterpart formerly known as Saint-Domingue. For example, the new forces in North America that were "in some senses more recognizably 'modern' such as industrialization, urbanization, the ascendancy of big business, came to preoccupy, in different ways, the realist imaginative preoccupations of many modern American writers" (Day 203-204). In comparison to the United States and Haiti, like Spain, Cuba was in many aspects was, for a lack of better words, "falling behind" in the quest for modernity. In response, Cuba finds itself on a quest to import foreign concepts that would help bring about this "crisis of nature", even if it is a manufactured crisis. *Sab*'s representation of this manufactured crisis is effective because it does not privilege one set of images or ideas over another. Furthermore, the novel ultimately does not force the reader to choose one over the other. On the contrary, the novel's conclusion invites the reader to struggle and wrestle with the distinct sets of images and ideas that Sab the mulatto embodies. Enlightenment or Romanticism? Logic and reason or individual experience of human emotion? Detachment from the object of love or passionate pursuit of love? Materialism or preservation of nature? European or autochthonous? Small-scale or large-scale plantations? Benign slavery or universal emancipation? The poetic or the intellectual? The reader is left with no definitive answer to any of these questions. Instead, through debate and comparison, *Sab* becomes a reflective exercise for the reader that may eventually lead to a consensus on what a sense of collective identity could look like for *all* Cubans. Left with an open, ongoing debate, the reader holds onto the protagonist's last wish: "sea feliz".

CHAPTER 2: "Livable forms of life"

Part I: Introduction

The autobiography of Juan Francisco Manzano has remained one of the most important texts in Caribbean and Latin American studies. Not only is the *Autobiografía* the only extant of its kind, it was written under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. At the time when Juan Francisco Manzano was commissioned by the renowned abolitionist Domingo del Monte y Aponte to write his autobiography in 1835, not only was the institution of slavery still in full operation in the Spanish Caribbean islands, Manzano himself had been and was *still a fugitive slave* after escaping Matanzas from his last mistress, the Marchioness de Prado y Ameno, in 1817 (Solano 115). The Marchioness de Prado y Ameno was still alive when Manzano undertook the daunting task of describing the horrific events he experienced under her possession. As if Manzano's task was not daunting enough, a few years after the first publication of his autobiography in Europe under the title *Life of the Negro Poet* by Richard Madden in 1840, his patrician patron Del Monte "levantaba sospechas por su presumible acción insurgente, lo que le acabó valiendo la acusación de haber participado en la Conspiración de la Escalera (1844) y su consecuente exilio en Madrid" (Solano 115-116). The accusation of Del Monte's presumed insurgency that forced him to go into exile in Madrid by extension, decidedly, would have threatened Manzano's own life… To say that this text was written under grave circumstances is an understatement. In spite of the potentially life-threatening situation he had entered, which Manzano would have been aware of, and number of other challenges (such as the difficulty of writing in this genre and the subsequent editing his text underwent), which will be examined later in this chapter, he wrote the only autobiography of a slave in Hispanic America.

To begin, I argue that Manzano's *Autobiografía* unquestionably participates in a larger, collective practice of anti-slavery efforts that had been in effect long before the publication of the autobiography. The extent to which the institution of slavery, specifically chattel slavery, perniciously affected the lives of approximately 12.5 million Africans cannot ever be fully understood. Even within these harrowing conditions, enslaved Africans participated in the anti-slavery efforts before the advent of the Enlightenment in the Americas. Examples of these anti-slavery efforts in the Caribbean that will be explored in further detail include but are not limited to the destruction of agriculture, poisoning livestock, becoming a maroon or a "cimarrón", and suicide. When the Enlightenment and the ideals of liberalism spread to the Americas, enslaved Africans were already experienced in these methods; the nineteenth century, as Manzano's autobiography demonstrates, simply opened another avenue wherein enslaved subjects could operate. According to Jerome Branche, Manzano's autobiography illustrates how free and enslaved Africans and Afrocreoles used

> whatever means were available to achieve their liberation. While learning to read and write may have been illegal in all of the Americas, there can be no question that there is a Black antislavery archive in writing that is available for recovery, whether this consisted of letters, testimony at trials, treaties, or else. [...] dispelling notions of unqualified illiteracy and unsophistication among the enslaved (68).

The Black anti-slavery archive extends beyond the scope of conventional literature. Certainly the institutional interdictions that prevented many enslaved Africans from learning to read and write constrained the production of slave narratives, poetry, and novels by enslaved subjects. Nonetheless, this does *not* mean that, due to the scarcity of texts like the *Autobiografía*, the Black anti-slavery archive is somehow "incomplete" or "inadequate". Texts such as epistolary exchanges, legal documents from court proceedings, newspaper clippings, and municipal records all demonstrate how emancipated and enslaved Africans and Afrocreoles alike searched for and

took advantage of any opportunity that could procure them an escape or refuge from enslavement and other forms of oppression.

This fundamental misconception of what does or does not count as an act of resistance stems from a long-standing practice of historicizing the Caribbean. Through this practice, acts of resistance are reduced and classified as "active" or "passive", "subversive" or "complicit", "heroic" or "unheroic". Under the "active", "subversive", "heroic" category, one finds the names of events and people: the Haitian Revolution, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Victor Schoelcher, 1848, ect… No matter how radical these events, people, and dates were, the repetition, simplification, and canonization of these acts of resistance not only creates the illusion of a teleological narrative of modernity in the history of the Caribbean, it also relegates any other act of resistance that did not "make it" into the canon as incidental and insignificant. This is where the "passive", "complicit", and "unheroic" acts of resistance are relegated. Acts of resistance such as committing suicide, destroying agriculture, poisoning livestock, or stealing, are often overshadowed and dismissed as ineffective:

> [...] by claiming that alleviation from these practices is one of the most common measurements of freedom from coercion that can be ascertained within slavery, it becomes possible to fathom and assess the challenges that the majority of enslaved subjects faced in their efforts to survive oppression. I am thinking specifically of those who did not 'make history' because their routine forms of resistance had never attained the status of the 'heroic' (Aching 69).

Aching challenges the notion that these acts of "passive" resistance, such as simply alleviation from slave duties, fail to participate in anti-slavery efforts in a significant or effective way. In what concerns this study, I explore how the *Autobiografía* reconceptualizes "effective" or "significant" acts of resistance. Manzano was still a slave at the time he receives the Delmontine commission to write the autobiography. In addition to the incontestable role that the *antiesclavistas* of Habana played in the production of this text, the preconceptions of all the

readers who would eventually read this text in the Americas and in Europe also played a role in this literary production. In short, these inescapable circumstances that played a role in the production of the *Autobiografía* greatly determined what Manzano the narrator could say and how he could say it. Adept to working within constraining, inescapable circumstances, I argue that Manzano's representation of these circumstances through the protagonist's performance of resistance and creativity in the narrative itself effectively become a way to make the reader question their own position and role in the narrative and, ultimately, the life of Manzano the slave.

The first part of my analysis focuses on the narrator's censorship of violence and terror. I title this section "*corramos un velo*" in reference to a passage where Manzano censors the description of an incident of torture. Here, I examine how Manzano the protagonist distances himself from the violence and terror of slavery, which is synonymous with the stigma of blackness, in order to create existential meaning for himself as a liberal subject. In the following section, "un mulatico fino", I examine the protagonist's performance of creativity. The first two sections of this chapter demonstrate how the protagonist's performance of creativity serves as a powerful representation of the narrator's own pursuit to create existential meaning while simultaneously tailoring the narrative to the expectations of the sympathetic, abolitionist reader. Impressed by the protagonist's journey from brutal constraint to liberal subjecthood. the reader is led to the question of the position Manzano the narrator in relation to his reader and vice versa: *where is this enlightened fugitive slave* now *in relation to us? Who are we to him?* This startling realization simultaneously puts into relief the reader's prejudice that puts enslaved subjects like Manzano in a position of disadvantage in the first place and demonstrates the narrator's agency in the pursuit of his own quest. In the third and final section, titled "*lloraba a mares*", I examine

how the protagonist's quest for existential meaning is essentially a journey to return home: La Habana. Obtaining emancipation is certainly part of the objective that drives the narrator's quest. However, a theme that is often elided in the analysis of the autobiography pertains to the narrator's nostalgic relationship with Havana. I read Manzano the protagonist's quest metaphorically and historically. The narrative is a representation of the socio-economic conditions that allowed Manzano to become a liberal subject but it is also a story of a hero's journey home. Everything the protagonist discovers, laments, endures, overcomes, and takes advantage of has meaning because of the role each of these moments play in guiding him back to his Ithaca: Havana. Through his journey, the protagonist's attachment to this place ends up replacing his filiation with his mistresses. In other words, his quest to return to Havana, to restore his connection to *his* place of origin, ends up taking precedence over the protagonist's obeisance and filiation to his masters. The protagonist eventually comes to the realization that his attempts to convince his masters of his superiority in relation to other slaves to his masters is a futile struggle. Read this way, the reader is led to question if and how the protagonist's escape to the only place where he knows he belongs suggests something about the narrator's affiliation with the *antiesclavistas*. The conclusion that the reader is left with is that there *is* something, someplace, that takes precedence over his meticulous work in writing the autobiography and his skillful fulfillment of his reader's expectations. With or without their support, Manzano the narrator demonstrates how he is willing to do whatever it takes (as demonstrated by the protagonist's performance) to remain in Havana not because the *antiesclavistas* gave that place to him but rather because he made that place *his* home.

Section II: "*corramos un velo*"

> Me rompieron las narices [...] ¡cuán frágil es la suerte del que está sujeto a continuas vicisitudes, como yo que nunca tenía hora segura! Lleváronme al cepo [...] Me atan las manos como las de Jesu Cristo: cargan y me meten los pies en las dos aberturas de la tabla. ¡Oh Dios! *Corramos un velo sobre esta escena tan triste* [my emphasis] (Manzano 96).

The narrator's representation of violence and terror, what he decides to describe and what he decides to "draw a curtain over" is the primary way the narrator creates existential meaning. The passage above is one of the most quoted passages in the academic discourse surrounding the *Autobiografía* because it brings this censorship to the foreground. It relates a horrific event when the Marchioness de Prado punishes Manzano for taking a leaf from a geranium plant in her garden. In the description of this event, Manzano deliberately omits the disturbing details from the punishment: "corramos un velo sobre esta escena tan triste". It would be remiss to glide over the fact that Manzano, a victim of violence and abuse, may have certainly developed coping mechanisms to deal with the trauma of his enslavement and one example of those mechanisms may be suppressing the details of harrowing memories. In the words of Sylvia Molloy, "in more oppressive situations, self-censorship becomes second nature" (39). However, instead of a psychoanalytic approach, I apply a more pragmatic approach to read and interpret the narrator's self-censorship. Juan Francisco Manzano the narrator is carefully constructing a protagonist that represents the persona he wants the reader to see him as. The truth of the matter is that "del Monte's ideal probably seemed the most desirable to Manzano and it may well have coincided, without too much conflict, with his self-image" (Molloy 39). The narrator would have been acutely aware that his text had to represent the cruelty and horror of the institution of slavery; he was writing a *slave* autobiography after all. I argue that the uniqueness of his representation of this brutality lies in the way through which censorship plays a role in dissociating himself from the negative connotations of degeneration that come from that brutality. The narrator chooses to

associate his self-image with something else, someone else who is defined not by his stigmata but by his performance of resilience.

Let us consider how this text differs from other similar nineteenth century abolitionist texts. The *Autobiografía* was the only one of its kind in the Spanish and French Caribbean, that does not mean however there were no other narratives that denounced the institution of slavery. Although these were fictional pieces, it is important to consider how the *Autobiografía* represented the cruelty of slavery in comparison to these. According to Solano,

> las novelas abolicionistas de esta generación, por el contrario, son obras ficcionales que buscan la reacción visceral que provoca el escenario de la tortura. La *Autobiografía*, al reflejar un mundo de grises, debilita nuestra capacidad de anticipación, al tiempo que limita cualquier exceso de apropiación por nuestra parte. [...] Manzano nos da una dosis muy calculada de su sufrimiento, pero no nos deja atravesar el umbral del horror esclavista (118).

Examples of these abolitionist novels include but are not limited to *Cecilia Valdés* by Cirilo Villaverde and *Sab* by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda. In comparison to the *Autobiografía*, novels like *Cecilia Valdés* denounce slavery through the portrayal of torture in order to provoke a "reacción visceral" in the reader. Let us take a look at a passage from Villaverde's novel:

> Apoyó la mano izquierda en la empuñadura y con la extremidad del mango del látigo, arrolló las faldas del vestido de la esclava hasta más arriba de las caderas y soltó la trenza del cuero crudo, que había sujetado en el hueco de la misma mano derecha. Todo esto por su órden, bien calculado, con calma y formalidad, como quien no tenía prisa, antes se proponía saborear goce exquisito, a cuyo efecto no debía precipitar los sucesos. [...] Descargado el primer latigazo con el aplomo y tino de quien posee brazo experimentado y de hierro, pudo convencerse el mayoral que la pajuela o punta de cáñamo torcida y nudosa, con chasquido peculiar, había trazado un surco ceniciento en las carnes de la muchacha. En seguida descargó otros y otros en más rápida sucesión hasta hacer saltar pedazos de la piel y fluir la sangre; sin que á todas estas la víctima exhalase una queja, ni hiciese otro movimiento que contraer los músculos y morderse los labios ("Project Gutenberg").

There are two key features in this passage that generate a visceral reaction. First, the narrator does not spare any detail to describe the depravity of the torturer. D. Liborio, the mayoral of the

plantation, is described as a sadist who leaps with joy at the opportunity to inflict agony on slaves. To execute his punishment, he uses a braided, leather whip, which likely refers to the *manatí*, a whip that was banned in the Spanish Caribbean islands because it was "too inhumane", and shows no sign of rush or hesitation, as if he were taking delight and pleasure in the act. The narrator describes in chilling detail how experienced the mayoral is in the execution of torture: he can determine whether the lash tears open the victim's skin by simply hearing the "chasquido peculiar" of the braided whip. This leads to the other key feature that intensifies the reader's visceral reaction to this passage: the detail of the brutality. D. Liborio delivers the lashes on the slave's back with such speed and ferocity that he causes the flayed flesh spring forth along with profuse rivulets of blood. In the middle of the carnage, the slave makes no sound, remaining absolutely still, tensing her muscles and biting her lips with the impact of every lash… This style of writing was common and conventional in Caribbean abolitionist fiction of the nineteenth century. The aim of these passages are, as described by Solano Escolano, to appall, to unnerve the reader. To describe the cruelty of slavery in this manner was standard and expected from the abolitionist readership of nineteenth century Cuba.

By comparison, the *Autobiografía* employs a very different approach. Not only does the narrator withhold details from the description of punishment (and perpetrators) to diminish the visceral reaction to the violence and cruelty, he does not lead the reader into the realm of suspense. By simply stating what happens and withholding the details, the reader's "capacidad de anticipación" is weakened. Essentially, Manzano limits "cualquier exceso de apropiación por nuestra parte" by withholding details, communicating only what he deems "necessary". The nature of this censorship – the selective disclosing of details and the eschewing of suspense and

horror from the reader – leads to the question: what is necessary? What *does* he want the reader to know? Let us consider the following passage:

> la verdadera historia de mi vida, empieza desde 18.9 en que fortuna se desplegó contra mí hasta el grado mayor [...] Por la más leve maldad propia de muchacho me encerraban por más de veinte y cuatro horas una carbonera. [...] lo que sufría con todo esto, bien puede imaginarse (Manzano 87).

In a similar way to the previous passage, the narrator eschews suspense by stating what happened to him in a very matter-of-fact way. Rather than building up anticipation to describe the violence he was subjected to, detailing the cruelty of the perpetrators with explicit detail, he condenses them into a sequence of recurring events. He addresses the reader candidly, almost as if he were sharing a pitiful misfortune that the white, *criollo* reader could imagine based precisely on the anti-slavery novels such as *Cecilia Valdés*: "*how I suffered through all of this, as you can well imagine.*" It is as if the narrator sought to downplay the cruelty of being locked in a coal cellar for more than twenty-four hours in order to bring another aspect into relief. That other aspect comes through the phrase "fortuna se desplegó contra mí hasta el grado mayor". From the very beginning, the narrator tells the reader exactly what he believes is the cause of every incident of brutality and terror he experienced in his life: luck. His turn with the wheel of Lady Fortune was simply a disadvantageous spin… Following this line of thought, the shift of focus away from the cruelty of the perpetrators to shitty luck strengthens the claim he makes at the beginning of this passage: the story of his life begins when luck took a negative turn. It implies that there is something *intrinsic* that he possesses an innate quality that becomes oppressed and wounded as a result of the unfortunate turn of events. This intrinsic quality is what the narrator describes as "la alegría y viveza de mi genio".

> Como llevaba una vida tan angustiada sufriendo casi diariamente rompedura de narices, hasta echar por ambos conductos los caños de sangre, lo mismo era llamarseme, que me entraba un temblor tan grande que a penas podia tenerme sobre mis piernas; pero

> suponiendo esto fingimiento, no pocas ocaciones recibí por manos de un negro vigorosos azotes [...] Desde la edad de trece o catorce años la alegría y viveza de mi genio, lo parlero de mis labios llamados pico de oro, todo se trocó en cierta melancolía, que se me hizo con el tiempo característica: […] lloraba y buscaba de ese consuelo en hallando ocasión de llorar, que siempre buscaba la soledad para dar rienda suelta a mis pesares; lloraba pero no gemía (Manzano 88).

Here again the reader is presented with a condensed description of multiple incidents of violence and cruelty. The fact that he refers to the corporal punishment as "[sufría] casi diariamente rompedura de narices" instead of "*el mayoral me rompía* la nariz diariamente", reminds the reader that the narrator's objective is still not to criminalize his mistresses or masters. The narrator's objective is to tell the story of his life and that life is one that has been marked by a great tragedy. Here, he expressly states what that great tragedy was: "*la alegría y viveza de mi genio, lo parlero de mis labios* llamados pico de oro, todo *se trocó en cierta melancolía*, que se me hizo con el tiempo característica". The reason why the narrator situates the beginning of the story of his life at the moment when "fortuna se desplegó contra mí" is because this endless corporal punishment and terror attacked *his spirit*. The brightness and liveliness of his spirit, his loquacity that had earned him the nickname "pico de oro" – his innate characteristic – began to become impaired and mutilated by the never-ending violence and terror to which he was subjected. In turn, he describes a certain kind of melancholy taking over his naturally bright and lively spirit, making him long for nothing more than occasions to weep and lament. Ultimately, the narrator constructs the *Autobiografía* as a narrative of loss, implying that previously at some point there was a state of possession. In that previous state, which will be explored in greater detail in the following sections, the protagonist experiences conditions that effectively give birth to and nurture the qualities he describes as his "alegría y viveza de mi genio". All of that is temporarily suspended, if not completely lost, when he is relocated to Matanzas… At this point, what the reader is left with is a narrative of loss, a key component of the protagonist's quest to

return home described in the last section of this chapter. What this section is concerned with is exploring how censorship is used for the development of what Solano Escolano calls a "*una conciencia disociada de su condición de esclavo*".

What I have described as the downplaying of brutality and eschewing of suspense builds upon the scholarship of Molloy who argues that the particular way in which Manzano writes about his misfortunes suggests that what he values, what he considers to be "the most interesting", is beyond the "patetismo y sentimentalismo que buscaban los antiesclavistas" as Solano Escolano describes. Molloy argues that based on Manzano's correspondence with Del Monte, it becomes clear that in the process "of writing himself down, Manzano's concept of 'the most interesting' has changed; that he is valuing something else in himself besides the story of his misfortunes" (Molloy 43). Based on the passage in the previous page, one can infer that the narrator's goal is not to demonize his perpetrators or provoke a visceral reaction in the reader. Rather, his objective appears to be to tell *his* life story and although that story coincides with the beginning of his misfortunes, it is *not* and *cannot* be reduced to a story of misfortunes. It is a story of a man aware of his unique, intrinsic qualities, but who laments as he sees how his "alegría y viveza de mi genio" whither under the fate of an unlucky spin with Lady Fortune's wheel. I add to Molloy's argument and argue that not only does Manzano value the story of his life more than the series of his misfortunes, Manzano does *not* identify himself with the misfortunes. In fact, he describes what happens to him as a result of these misfortunes as a personal flaw, as an intrinsic shortcoming from an *other* Manzano. The following passage illustrates that this other Manzano is simply too weak, not resilient enough, suggesting that he identifies with an entirely different persona, an *other* Manzano, one that is dissociated from the brutality and terror of slavery. Toward the end of his second relocation to Matanzas, Manzano

experiences two horrifying incidents, one followed almost immediately by the other. First, he is falsely accused of stealing a *capón* from his mistress. Consequently, as a way to make him confess, he is mauled by dogs, his shoulder is dislocated, and he is tortured by the *mayoral* for nine consecutive nights and released when the missing *capón* is found. Shortly thereafter, Manzano survives when a building crashes upon him and another slave. In this incident, he witnesses the horrific death of this slave who is crushed beneath a wooden beam, his eyes and brain trickling out of his crushed skull. Following these two incidents, Manzano describes his experience as a "melancólico estado":

> mi corazón estaba tan oprimido, que ni la comida que era para mí la más sagrada y precisa atención me alegraba: comía poco y casi siempre llorando. [...] Toda mi viveza desapareció, y como mi hermano me quería tanto se hizo entre ambos común este abatimiento: él no hacía más que estarme consolando pero sus consuelos eran llorar conmigo. Por eso no me llevaban al pueblo detrás de la volante, y todos caían sobre mi para hacerme jugar, aunque en balde, porque nunca salía de mi melancólico estado (Manzano 98)

Here, the language strongly suggests a dissociation from the grief and depression Manzano experiences as a result of the traumatic series of events. "Toda [su] viveza", an attribute he previously described as an innate characteristic, is stifled. This quality becomes stifled and "[su] corazón estaba tan oprimido" because he was unable to escape "de mi estado melancólico". Beneath Manzano's attribution of culpability to this emotional instability for the disappearance of his "viveza" lies a certain frustration and an acute state of annoyance. I build upon Solano Escolano's scholarship in which he observes how "el estado emocional del narrador es egoísta, pues lucha por su propia preservación, por la justificación de sus acciones y por provocar la adhesión a su causa personal" (Solano 123-124). I argue that Manzano's description of his misfortunes conveys a certain kind of frustration toward and disapproval of the "melancholy" he succumbed to. Furthermore, this frustration and disapproval from the fact that Manzano is

engaged in a "lucha por su propia preservación". In stating that *he* could not extricate *himself* from this melancholic state suggests that there is one Manzano – the one who is writing the *Autobiografía* as an act of self-preservation – and he was in a struggle with another Manzano – the one who succumbed to melancholy the one depicted in this scene.

This prompts the question: are the efforts to draw a curtain over this *other* Manzano the result of editorial censorship or the narrator's own censorship? To read the *Autobiografía*, one must proceed from the premise that it was

> an inordinately manipulated text – a slave narrative that, besides having dispossession for its subject, was, in its very composition and publication, dispossessed. It was written at the request of another (del Monte); it was corrected and edited by another (Suárez y Romero); it was translated and altered by another (Madden) […] and it was deprived of its second part. It was, in short, a text used by others over which Manzano had, apparently, little or no control (Molloy 38).

After Del Monte commissioned Manzano to write this text in 1835, this original manuscript, which is currently curated by the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí de La Habana, underwent the first round of edits by Suárez y Romero from 1835 to 1839 and was given to English abolitionist Richard Madden to publish the first edition in Europe in 1840. From 1835 to 1839, the manuscript underwent edits that corrected "una sintaxis poco ortodoxa lleno de tachaduras, repeticiones, faltas de ortografía y palabras ininteligibles" (Solano 116). Even though these edits inevitably create a sort of the tension between slave who writes "extensos párrafos de carácter oral, mezclando el discurso directo e indirecto" (Solano 116) and the abolitionist editors who are committed to presenting a text that is conforms to the standards of the audience of educated readers, this still does not compare to the manipulation that the text underwent in the 1840 edition. The differences between the 1835 manuscript and Madden's edition are so drastically different that "'deberían considerarse dos textos distintos'"; it is not until the 2007 edition

composed by William Luis (the edition I use for my analysis) that the degree to which the *Autobiografía* was manipulated and used by others becomes exceedingly clear:

> las modificaciones menos honradas, podríamos decir, que lo inclinan subrepticiamente hacia el patetismo y sentimentalismo que buscaban los antiesclavistas. Las más claras son la eliminación de elementos molestos para la causa abolicionista como el hecho de que Manzano asistiera a la ópera con sus amos o la estrecha relación que mantiene con su primera ama. Su muerte, por ejemplo, es relatada trágicamente por Manzano, lo que debilita un potencial relato maniqueo entre el ama y el esclavo (Solano 116-117).

As a slave narrative, the *Autobiografía* needed to be "incorporated into the white literary establishment (and thus validated by it)" (Molloy 39). What does this mean? In order to be incorporated into this white literary establishment, in order to be under the aegis of the patrons who gave Manzano this commission, the conventions the autobiographer had to abide by go far beyond lexical and grammatical correctness. What the edition of William Luis illustrates is that the readers were ultimately concerned with *what* the slave autobiographer told *more than* how he told it. The removal of entire sections from the 1835 manuscript where Manzano describes his trip to the opera or the close relationship he maintains with his first mistress clearly conveys this message: the representation of slavery the audience expected to see was incongruous and undesirably incompatible with Manzano's experience of slavery. This circles back to the fact that Manzano was commissioned by Del Monte to write this text; the *Autobiografía* was, first and foremost, written for abolitionists. Above all else, the *Autobiografía* needed to serve as propaganda for the *antiesclavistas*. Anecdotes of a house slave who enjoyed attending performances of *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *Le nozze di Figaro* not only are incompatible with the representation of "patetismo y sentimentalismo que buscaban los antiesclavistas", these passages were an obstruction in the abolitionist agenda of the mid-nineteenth century. It is worth recalling the context in which this autobiography was being written: approximately three decades after the Haitian Revolution. In the words of Solano "en Manzano se cifraba la solución al temor

generalizado de la clase criolla de una rebelión violenta de esclavos, cimarrones y libertos, como había sucedido en Haití en 1804" (115). Manzano's *Autobiografia* was playing an important role in a much larger movement, far beyond the scope of Manzano's literary audience. The impending threat of a violent revolution lingered in the Spanish Caribbean islands for several decades after the revolution in Saint Domingue[3]; this simultaneously instilled terror in the psyche of the Cuban criollo class and garnered increasing support among criollos for a peaceful abolition of the institution of slavery lest a repetition of the events in Saint Domingue take place in Cuba. What other text could better concretize the alternative to the Cuban criollo's generalized fear of a violent slave revolution than an autobiography of a Cuban slave who sought to procure his freedom through non-violent means? The degree to which Manzano would have been aware of this fact is unclear, but it is beyond question that the *Autobiografía* served to advance the *antiesclavistas*' propagandist endeavors.

In short, there is a tension created between two kinds of censorship: the editors' and the narrator's. The one the reader observes in the scenes of violence and terror is *not* the result of editorial manipulation. It would be illogical for the Delmontine circle, Suárez and Romero, and Madden to have demanded a "less" brutal portrayal of slavery. The censorship that downplays the brutality and eschews suspense comes from the narrator himself. How effectively the narrator's censorship holds up against the censorship that comes from the abolitionists' editorial manipulation opens onto a discussion fraught with controversy: does the transactional nature of the commission that Manzano receives from his patron del Monte (and by extension to his *antiesclavista* audience) constrain the narrative? There is evidence to suggest that Del Monte

[3] In *Modernity Disavowed*, Sibylle FIscher argues that one of the ways in which the fear of a violent slave revolt was manifested in the psyche of Cuban creoles was through the "severe censorship ensured that none of the narratives that depicted the brutality of slavery could be published in Cuba at the time" (68-69).

promised Manzano he would help him purchase his freedom in exchange for accepting to write the *Autobiografía*: "en 1835, cuando recibe el encargo de escribir su vida, aún no era un hombre libre. Su liberación llegó tras la escritura, cuando su mecenas Domingo del Monte promovió una campaña para comprar su libertad en la que contribuyeron decenas de personas en cantidades muy variables" (Solano 115). As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Manzano's last mistress, the Marchioness de Prado y Ameno, was still alive when he received Del Monte's commission. The fact is that Manzano was writing a text that could potentially incriminate him: "Manzano protected himself from being accused of publicly speaking out against slavery by composing 'Treinta años' in a universal register, so too would he have wanted to be certain that denouncing his second mistress's cruelty in writing would not lead to punishment" (Aching 71). In short, to make the case that Manzano was being exploited by his patrician patron Del Monte and the circle of abolitionist literati in La Habana is not impossible in light of that fact that Manzano was known and a part of the abolitionist social circles in La Habana since before 1821:

> Manzano se convierte en un cimarrón popular en los círculos abolicionistas, que lo protegen y costean la publicación de sus *Poesías líricas* en 1821. Su caso era muy jugoso para la causa porque aprendió a escribir de manera autodidacta y a escondidas de sus amos, que le tenían prohibido cualquier actividad de índole intelectual (Solano 115).

The *antiesclavistas* of La Habana saw the propagandist potential in Manzano and leveraged the fact that he was still a fugitive slave (since 1817) in order to procure an irresistible first-person account of a slave who taught himself to read and write while still being enslaved. I argue that the exigencies of the Delmontine commission determined *what* the narrator included in the *Autobiografía* but not *how* he represented the brutality of slavery. If Manzano complied with the removal of entire passages from his narrative, that does not mean that he was unable to exercise his own form of censorship in the passages that received the abolitionist seal of approval. In what follows, I illustrate how Manzano certainly complied with Del Monte and Suárez y Romero's

expectations, and to a large extent the expectations from the larger audience that would come to read the *Autobiografía*. However, in the words of Gerard Aching, "he was not willfully servile. Rather, he deftly employed obeisance in order to gain his freedom" (91)[4].

The censorship of brutality and cruelty achieves a key role in the development of a figure I have described as "Manzano the protagonist". Through the narrator's censorship, the violence and terror of slavery effectively serves as a foil against which the narrator's "alegría y viveza de mi genio, lo parlero de mis labios" is brought into relief. I build upon Solano Escolano's concept of Manzano's development of a dissociative consciousness to argue that the narrator creates an other Manzano, Manzano the protagonist, who is divorced from the pathos of slavery and espoused with the ethos of a free man. This other Manzano embodies existential meaning, and performs liberal subjectivity. This idea of two different Manzanos becomes clearer in the following passage. Here, the description of brutality serves to highlight the qualities of the Manzano who is espoused to the ethos, and in this case the bravery, of a free man.

> En habiéndome visto, quiso preguntarme, qué había hecho: más el mayoral, imponiéndole silencio, se lo trató de estorbar, sin atender a ruegos ni dádivas: irritado porque lo habían hecho levantar a aquella hora, alzó la mano, y le dio a mi madre con el manatí. Este golpe lo sentí en el corazón: dar un grito y *convertirme de manso cordero en*

[4] The topic of Manzano's "deftly employed obeisance" opens onto the academic discourse on the lived experiences of enslaved subjects in the Americas. In her research on the transgenerational trauma of the Holocaust, Gabriele Schwab argues that "one can acknowledge the historical facts of the Holocaust yet continue to disavow its existential and experiential impact" (Graff 182). In my analysis of the *Autobiografía*, I acknowledge and focus on the historical facts of slavery in the Caribbean and how that informs the reader about the autobiographer's unique position. To recognize the very real existential and experiential impact of slavery on the life of Juan Francisco Manzano, I make a clear distinction between the human induced trauma that Manzano the narrator suffered and the representation of human-induced trauma that Manzano the protagonist depicts. The space reserved for the psychological and physical human-induced trauma that the narrator suffered remains inaccessible through our analysis of this text; there are not enough words to accurately depict what an enslaved subject experienced. According to Gilda Graff, "to be the victim of human induced trauma is the ultimate mortification, because there is no shame as profound as that which destroys subjectivity, which says through word or action, 'What you need, what you desire, and what you feel are of complete and utter insignificance'" (189). The objective of my analysis of the way Manzano the protagonist responds to the representation of violence and terror is to examine how this helps the Manzano the narrator build his credibility as an autobiographer and show his merit to become a participant in liberal subjecthood to his antiesclavista reader. This credibility and demonstration of merit is a key component of Manzano's "deftly employed obeisance".

> *un león*, todo fue uno: me le zafé con un fuerte tirón del brazo por donde me llevaba y me le tiré encima con dientes y manos: es de considerarse cuantos manatiazos, puntapies y otros golpes llevaría. [...] la arrojaron por tierra para azotarla, no hacía más que pedir por Dios: todo lo resistí por ella: pero al oír estallar el primer foetazo, *enfurecido como un tigre, o como la fiera más animosa* estuve a pique de perder la vida a manos del citado D. Silvestre – pasemos, pasemos en silencio el resto de esta escena dolorosa [my emphasis] (Manzano 93).

Unlike the description of brutality in previous passages, it is clear that Manzano adopts a different approach: he sets the stage for this specific incident. There is something Manzano seeks to showcase in this scene. Among his duties and roles during his first relocation to Matanzas, he served as a page for his mistress the Marchioness de Prado. Upon returning late from one of his trips to the city with the Marchioness on that specific night, due to having fallen off the carriage because of exhaustion, he is met with the irritation and wrath of the *mayoral*. Livid for being woken up late at night, the *mayoral* proceeds to take out his rage on his mother with the lash of a *manatí*. Here, description of the brutality is immediately followed by the narrator's reaction: "este golpe lo sentí en el corazón". Witnessing the brutality that he had been subjected to in the past inflicted on his mother awakens a different reaction within him: his protective instinct. In what follows, Manzano is described as a docile lamb transforming into a fierce lion, shaking himself loose from the grip of the D. Silvestre, he pounces on the *mayoral*, and attacks him tooth and nail despite knowing all the "manatiazos, puntapies y otros golpes" he would suffer. When they pry him off, they proceed to fling his mother to the ground to deliver more lashes. His attempts to hold back his wrath fail the moment he hears the crack of the first lash, causing him to become enraged "como un tigre, o como la fiera más animosa" and attack the *mayoral* in defense of his mother even if it kills him… Manzano's metaphorical description of himself as a fierce beast strengthens the concept of two separate Manzanos. On the one hand, there is the Manzano who is fraught by the pathos of slavery, who anguishes and withers under the violence

and terror of his condition, whose melancholy drives him to lament and weep his pitiful state. In other words, a "manso cordero". On the other, there is an other Manzano, a man divorced from the pathos of slavery and espoused to the ethos of a free man, characterized by his bright mind and loquacity, and who carries within him an unshakeable bravery, an everlasting protective instinct that is awakened by witnessing the display of violence against his mother. Here, the portrayal of brutality represents Manzano the protagonist as "la fiera más animosa".

This technique of creating an alternative consciousness by means of dissociation leads to the topic of anti-blackness in Caribbean literature. The narrator's dissociation from the pathos of slavery is essentially a way of dissociating himself from other slaves. Shortly before his escape, the narrator describes an exchange between him and a house servant who candidly expresses his opinion about him: "'Hombre que tú no tienes vergüenza para estar pasando tantos trabajos: *cualquier negro bozal* está mejor que tú: *un mulatico fino* con tantas habilidades como tú, al momento hallará quien lo compre [...]'" [my emphasis] (Manzano 114). Manzano the protagonist is represented as superior to and, most importantly, *more deserving* of freedom than "cualquier negro bozal" because this contrast implies that if there are "model individuals who, like himself, deserve a better lot in life (i.e. emancipation) [...] there is another category that does not" (Aching 78). Manzano the narrator demonstrates his adeptness to respond to the racism profoundly embedded in the abolitionist agenda by developing a dissociative consciousness, embodied in Manzano the protagonist, to detach himself from blackness, and situate his existential meaning elsewhere. This pragmatism demonstrated through the narrator's dissociation is deeply connected with the dominant ideology that Manzano was, like everyone else in early nineteenth century Cuban society, subjected to: the ideology of whitening.

To illustrate this, let us consider Frantz Fanon's discourse in his seminal text *Peau noire, masques blancs*. Fanon, a psychiatrist by profession at the time he writes this text, argues that the black man suffers a kind of "névrose" that stems from the fact that "le Noir n'a pas de résistance ontologique aux yeux du Blanc":

> Car le Noir n'a plus à être noir, mais à l'être en face du Blanc… Le Noir n'a pas de résistance ontologique aux yeux du Blanc [...] leur métaphysique, ou moins prétentieusement leurs coutumes et les instances auxquelles elles renvoyaient, étaient abolies parce qu'elles se trouvaient en contradiction avec une civilisation qu'ils ignoraient et qui leur en imposait (Fanon 88-89).

Fanon argues that black man's "résistance ontologique", or his ability to create existential meaning for himself, is non-existent in the eyes of the white man. The black man's "métaphysique", or the explanation of his being in the world, is in direct opposition with the white man's civilization. While Fanon's text is focused on the experience of the black French West Indian, I am interested in how his argument can be applied to explain Manzano's quest for existential meaning. Like "le Noir" that Fanon describes, Manzano does not have "résistance ontologique" before the white man, namely the *antiesclavistas* for whom he was writing. This is a result from the fact that "leur coutumes", religion, language, any practice that could create existential meaning for Manzano was mutilated and destroyed by the time Manzano was born into the institution of slavery. His "métaphysique" was violently destroyed through the Middle Passage: "the capture of Africans and their transport to the [New World] [...] meant a complete disruption from their land, people, and customs. Attachments, one's place in the world, continuity with the past, an expectable future— all were destroyed" (Graff 184-185). This destruction leaves Manzano, a black man, at the mercy of the civilization that took away his "résistance ontologique" in the first place. In his quest for existential meaning and freedom, Manzano finds no recourse other than the culture, language, religion of the Cuban criollo class

that was assisting him procure his freedom: “le nègre doit se présenter d’une certaine manière… au Noir on demande d’être bon négro” (Fanon 27). In the universe of the white man, there is an ideology that dictates how the black man has to behave, speak, dress, and think. That is the ideology of Whitening: “le Noir est apprécié en référence à son degré d’assimilation” (Fanon 29). While Fanon argues that the black man must ultimately be extricated from this universe in order to become an independent subject, in what concerns the narrative of Manzano, the degree to which he assimilates to the white man’s universe is precisely how he creates existential meaning. The development of Manzano’s dissociative consciousness, represented by the protagonist, is a conscious effort to insert himself in a universe that recognizes and validates him as a subject:

> His avoidance of Blackness in the relation, and his espousal of the cultural markers of Whiteness [...], point to a conscious constitution of self as a racial subject; one that is in strict accordance with the dictates of the dominant ideology of Whitening [...] The writer's insistence on his own specificity as mulato in the autobiography, however, is quite conscious. Manzano, in other words, is clear about what he is not, racially speaking (Branche 81).

When we reconsider Manzano's “deftly employed obeisance” in light of the dominant ideology of Whitening, his avoidance of blackness and “espousal of the cultural markers of Whiteness” becomes one of the clearest indicators of Manzano’s desire to participate in subjecthood. By distancing himself from “cualquier negro bosal”, he distances himself from the destruction of subjectivity that occurs in the psyche of those who are enslaved. For Manzano, the claim “*soy un mulatico fino*” is the equivalent to the affirmation “*tengo subjetividad*”. This same process of dissociation and reassociation whereby Manzano deals with the effects of the violence and terror of slavery is reproduced in the macro-level. By avoiding association with Blackness, Manzano distances himself from the stereotype of an “inferior” racial subject that is undeserving of freedom. In the context of early nineteenth century Cuba, that “inferior” racial subject includes

but is not limited to the *cimarrón*, who, in the psyche of white Cuban criollos, embodies the violence that took place in Saint Domingue at the end of the eighteenth century. The creation of this protagonist who thinks, speaks, and acts in accordance with the "dictates of the dominant ideology of Whitening", the narrator conveys his commitment to create existential meaning for himself and his desire to be recognized as a subject by the very same system that excluded him from participating in liberal subjecthood in the first place.

This analysis of how Manzano the protagonist represents the narrator's process of creating existential meaning is challenging in light of the fact that plantation societies historically precluded that slaves could not experience pain, that their joy in servitude exceeded any momentary unhappiness. According to Saidiya Hartman in her study of nineteenth-century North American plantation society, it was precluded that "no, the slave is not in pain. Pain isn't really pain for the enslaved, because of their limited sentience, tendency to forget, and easily consolable grief. Lastly, the slave is happy and, in fact, his happiness exceeds 'our' own" (Hartman 36). Unnerving as it sounds, the overwhelming consensus among the ruling, land-owning class was that it did not matter how severe the punishment or labor that slaves endured was, it was not cruel or brutal because slaves were not capable of experiencing pain and suffering in the same way other humans did. Thus, it is necessary to recognize that Manzano's narrative of his "misfortunes" is a necessary rejoinder to this unnerving, overwhelming consensus that permeated nineteenth century plantation societies at that time. What would be considered as a routine tolerance to pain and torture or masochistic suffering by slave owners should remain separate from any kind of passive resistance that slaves performed in secret on the plantations. The actual experience of pain and suffering that slaves were subjected to "must be recognized in its historicity and as the articulation of a social condition of brutal constraint,

extreme need, and constant violence, in other words, it is the perpetual condition of ravishment" (Hartman 51). Without this understanding of pain, without the recognition that pain extends far beyond the lashes of a whip, the crushing of bones and tearing of ligaments, the dislocation of limbs, food deprivation and isolation in coal cellars, a number of unwanted implications can arise. The fact is that "the most invasive forms of slavery's violence lie not in these exhibitions of 'extreme' suffering or in what we see but in what we don't see", rather they lie "in the benign scenes of plantation life […] reciprocity and recreation obscure the quotidian routine of violence" (Hartman 42). Without this explicit understanding of pain, this analysis of the *Autobiografía*'s appropriation of pain and suffering can imply that enslaved subjects who did not exhibit resilience in the way Manzano describes somehow failed to engage in effective or adequate enough anti-slavery practices. It further implies that enslaved subjects who underwent less corporal punishment in comparison to Manzano were somehow better off and lived relatively less tormented lives than him. Lastly, it implies that if only Manzano had exercised a greater degree of resilience, if only he had dissociated himself from the pathos of slavery sooner, his participation in anti-slavery efforts would have been more efficacious and perhaps procured his emancipation sooner. To dispel these implications, it is necessary to reserve this space for pain as the articulation of a "perpetual condition of ravishment". Towards the end of his narrative, Manzano describes an incident where he runs away from the *mayoral* to escape punishment.

> no estaba yo nada tranquilo esperando la hora de quiebra: conocía las vanas vicisitudes de mi vida y no dudaba de lo que me iba a suceder. En efecto: vi venir al mayoral, como no tenía yo el ánimo para aguantar azotes, me escape por la espalda del jardín: y corrí tanto y en tan breve tiempo, que cuando me buscaban por toda la casa, yo estaba oculto entre los mangles del castillo (Manzano 107-108).

Following the trajectory of the narrative, the narrative presents this as the "breakthrough" moment in the development of Manzano's dissociation from the pathos of slavery, presenting it as a kind of Davidic trial necessary in order to finally defeat Goliath… While this passage brings the bravery and defiance of the protagonist to the foreground, emphasizing the narrator's choice to dissociate from the pathos of slavery, it is crucial to reserve the space for the actual experience of pain and suffering that is downplayed by the narrator. No matter the degree to which a slave like Manzano displayed endurance under the avalanche of lashes and blows, no matter how many times he ran away from the *mayoral* to escape punishment, none of this could ever serve as a replacement for a complete and total destruction of the oppressive structures that had enslaved and dispossed him and the millions of other laborers in the Americas.

Section III: "un mulatico fino"

> Al día siguiente que era Domingo cuando la gente estaba en misa, me llamó un criado libre de la casa, y estando con él a sola me dijo: 'Hombre que tú no tienes vergüenza para estar pasando tantos trabajos: cualquier negro bozal esta mejor que tú: *un mulatico fino* con tantas habilidades como tú, al momento hallará quien lo compre [...]' [my emphasis] (Manzano 114).

The narrative of his "misfortunes" creates two distinct Manzanos: one who is stigmatized by the pathos of slavery and the other who dissociates from that stigma and creates existential meaning from his struggle for self-preservation, the "mulatico fino" described above. Manzano's unique portrayal of brutality puts into relief some of the characteristics of this other self, of this "real" or "true" Manzano. Characteristics such as "viveza de genio" and "parlero de labios" only begin to scratch the surface of this other Manzano. The "mulatico fino" described in the passage above is essentially characterized by differentiation. His differentiation from "cualquier negro bozal" makes the case for his own emancipation depend on a hierarchical classification that precludes

that certain slaves, the illiterate and unskilled, do not deserve emancipation while others, skilled "mulaticos finos" such as himself, do. This aligns with the ideology of the *antiesclavista* audience for it questions whether the development of a collective "black" consciousness, a consciousness built on the shared experiences of all enslaved subjects, is necessary for abolition. Furthermore, the individuality of this "mulatico fino" reassures the *antiesclavista* reader because it puts into question whether it is necessary for enslaved laborers to engage in a collective fight in order to gain their freedom. In comparison to a story of a collective slave community capable of initiating a violent revolution, the story of a "mulatico fino" like Manzano who builds a case for his freedom by differentiating himself from other slaves becomes a much more palatable narrative for the collective consciousness of nineteenth century Cuban *criollos*. Manzano's strategy of differentiation and individualization participates within a larger set of practices whereby enslaved subjects became modern liberal subjects. In *The Intimacies of Four Continents,* Lisa Lowe argues that the development of modern liberal subjects is achieved by means of the historical division of world processes: "forms of both liberal subject and society in the imperial center are possible only in relation to laboring lives in the colonized geographies or 'zones of exception' with which they coexist" (Lowe 16). One becomes free, a liberal subject, a participant in liberal society in relation to the un-free, the outcast, the ones who are in the "zones of exclusion". Manzano, like all the other enslaved subjects who fought to gain their freedom and enter the realm of liberal subjecthood by whatever means necessary, was following the patterns that had been established and institutionalized over the course of Western colonialism. The very same universalizing concepts that "[affirmed] liberty for modern man while subordinating the variously colonized and dispossessed peoples" (Lowe 6) ended up becoming the means through which Manzano creates his own existential meaning.

The creation of this existential meaning is carried out through the "mulatico fino's" performance of creativity. In the socio-historical level, the protagonist's performance of creativity is a certain kind of endorsement of the *antiesclavistas*' propagandist efforts. As this section will illustrate, the creation of a protagonist whose personal creativity enable him to "rise above" his dehumanized condition and eventually lead him to finding refuge in Havana is a performance of the kind of "ideal" emancipated subject that Cuban *antiesclavistas* needed to support their case for a non-violent abolition. At the same time, I propose to read the protagonist's performance of creativity also as a metaphorical representation of what Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins defines as "livable forms of life": the measures taken to create a way of being-in-the-world that are personally satisfying within conditions that are constraining but flexible. The possibility for Manzano to become a liberal subject was enabled by the socio-economic changes from the end of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. Colonial cities at the beginning of the nineteenth century "asistían a la emergencia de grupos heterogéneos que comenzaron a debilitar fronteras urbanas [...] En una ciudad donde el reboso permitía a una mulata pasar por lo que no era y ser confundida por una señora, bien podía confiar Manzano en disimularse en la textura porosa del espacio público" (Bergero 12). The increasing social mobility in urban slavery allowed Manzano to learn profitable skills that would eventually enable him to enter the realm of liberal subjecthood. At the same time, the representation of these historical circumstances lend themselves to an analysis of how creativity – as defined by Donald Winnicot – performed by the "mulatico fino" protagonist invites the reader to imagine an alternative way of being-in-the-world that was personally satisfying to enslaved subjects like Manzano. Similar to how the narrative of loss created through the "story of his misfortunes" implies that there was a self to begin with, the narrative of the "mulatico fino" created through

the performance of creativity implies that that self is in charge of determining *how* his existence bears meaning within the parameters of liberalism. The performance of creativity functions as a trope that reproduces the abolitionist reader's desired "ideal" emancipated mulatto and *simultaneously* affirms the creative role that Manzano the narrator plays in the development of his own existential meaning. The implication is that if the "mulatico fino" protagonist creates existential meaning through his personal creativity, Manzano the fugitive slave also has developed his own personal approach to becoming a participant in liberal subjecthood. In short, there is a parallel, *interdependent* development of *performative* and *personal* creativity that is played out in the narrative. While the former tailors to the abolitionist cause, the latter contributes to the creation of the narrator's existential meaning.

Terms such as "creativity", "recreation" and "play" are characteristically ambiguous terms that, due to their connotations to leisure and boredom, require some reconceptualization. To achieve this, it is helpful to begin with what Gerard Aching describes as a "compulsive propensity for creativity".

> if slavery systematically constrains the enslaved subject's ability to develop self-consciousness capable of openly assuming an ethical stance vis-a-vis his or her enslavers, then it is the enslaved subject's *compulsive propensity for creativity* beyond the strict assignments of forced labor that facilitates the degree of routine psychological resistance to oppression and that seeks to compensate for the negation of the moral development of enslaved subjects [my emphasis] (Aching 70).

Aching's concept of a "compulsive propensity for creativity" offers a more nuanced understanding of self-consciousness and individual expression: even in the most brutal and constraining the conditions known in human history, an enslaved subject's ability to be creative cannot be fully eradicated. According to this interpretation, especially based on the descriptor "compulsive", it would appear that "creativity" fits in the ambiguous category of "survival instincts" in human beings. I argue that "creativity" should not be assimilated to "survival

instincts" for two major reasons. First, there is substantial evidence in the fields of evolutionary biology and psychology to suggest that humans, as compared to other animals, while they do have "reflexes" they do *not* have "instincts".[5] Relegating "creativity" to the category of "instincts", which is an involuntary behavior that has been built into a species biologically, minimizes the deliberate and methodical component of "creativity". Aching's interpretation of "creativity" as the way enslaved subjects exercise routine psychological resistance to oppression offers an understanding of "creativity" as an intentional and methodical approach to deal with the inescapable conditions that negate "the moral development of enslaved subjects."

In addition to Aching's interpretation of creativity, I include Donald Winnicott's definition in *Playing and Reality*. "Creativity" is an individual's approach to the external: "the creativity that we are studying belongs to the approach of the individual to external reality. Assuming reasonable brain capacity, enough intelligence to enable the individual to become a person living and taking part in the life of the community, everything that happens is creative" (Winnicott 91). The deliberate, purposeful aspect of creativity that Aching alludes to in the previous passage becomes clearer in Winnicott's interpretation. While creativity can be and has been understood as a talent or a personality trait, I find Winnicott's broader definition more useful insofar as it emphasizes the pragmatism *and* individuality of creativity. Creativity is not just a matter of survival or taking part in a community, it is ultimately determined by the individual's *personal preference*: if and how they want to survive and if and how they want to take part in a community is that individual's personal decision and approach. Everything an individual does to become a part of their external reality, or not, is an expression of that individual's personal preference. What would be considered practical or effective by one could

[5] According to the Department of Social Sciences of Hunter College, "humans have reflexes but not instincts; thus they must learn all that they know" ("Socialization").

be considered impractical and ineffective by another. Even for enslaved subjects like Manzano who are born into inescapable conditions of brutal constraint and perpetual ravishment, the capacity to exercise creativity is never lost. According to Winnicott:

> there cannot be a complete destruction of a human individual's capacity for creative living and that, even in the most extreme case of compliance and the establishment of a false personality, hidden away somewhere there exists *a secret life that is satisfactory* because of its being creative or original to that human being (92).

Cases of "extreme compliance" can stifle creativity but *not* the individual's *capacity* for creative living. If the representation of creativity in the *Autobiografía*, as modeled by the "mulatico fino" protagonist, is to help the reader imagine how enslaved subjects are able to live creatively, to create a way of being-in-the world within inescapable but pliable circumstances, creativity emerges as a private, secret activity that serves the primary purpose of bringing satisfaction to that individual.

The protagonist's performance of creativity demonstrates a dual function: it describes how a "mulatico fino" could fit into the society of liberal subjects and it demonstrates how slaves' compulsive propensity for creativity can facilitate the degree of routine psychological resistance to oppression and create existential meaning for those enslaved subjects. Before the protagonist is able to take advantage of what Adriana Bergero describes as "la blandura y excepción de ciertas prácticas cotidianas para hacerlas propias" (9) in the urban space of Havana, the "mulatico fino" models what Aching would describe as a compulsive propensity for creativity. Under the custody of his first mistress, before he was relocated to Matanzas with the Marchioness de Prado y Ameno, Manzano describes in great detail a variety of practices he learns and performs, some of them in a clandestine manner. Manzano describes how, at the age of ten years, he was able to recite

> de memoria los más largos sermones de Fray Luis Granada; y el numeroso concurso que visitaba la casa, me oía los domingos cuando venía de aprender a oír la santa misa con mi madrina, pues aunque en casa la había no se me permitía asistir a ella por el juguete y distracción con los otros muchachos; sabía también todo el catecismo (Manzano 84).

The narrator highlights the performative aspect of his superior memorization skills in this anecdote. His ability to memorize long sermons he would hear in mass and the fact that he knew the catechism by heart are remarkable precisely because they were recognized by his mistress and the "numeroso concurso que visitaba la casa". From an early age, his masters were impressed by him, he *was known* for having superior memorization skills. One should note that this is not an employable skill; reciting sermons by memory or memorizing the catechism are impressive skills but they do not paint a picture of what Manzano could do for a living as an emancipated subject in early nineteenth century Cuba. This description of the protagonist's memorization skills so early in the narrative functions as a moment of inception that ignites a flame in the mind the "mulatico fino" protagonist and as compass that eventually leads to the resolution where protagonist's escapes from Matanzas to make his way back "home" to Havana. Like the Homeric epic in which the hero conquers song of the sirens, escapes Circe's island, and navigates the tides of Scylla and Charybdis in order to eventually return to Ithaca, the *Autobiografía* is a story in which the protagonist, the "mulatico fino", holds onto his refined and sophisticated skills in spite of the violence and terror he is subjected to in Matanzas to eventually return to Havana. The difference is that, unlike the Homeric hero, the credibility and ethos of the *Autobiografía*'s protagonist in the eyes of his readers is not yet well established. To his reader, Manzano is still a fugitive slave, a tortured and abused man who managed to escape the cruetly and brutality of his last mistress. Thus, the narrator still has to show to his reader *who* Manzano was before he was relocated to Matanzas, what did he discover in this period that prepared him to run away and arrive at the place where he is now. The question underlying the protagonist's

performance of creativity is an indirect one: if the protagonist is able to challenge his masters' prejudice by impressing them with his recitation skills, it is not impossible to imagine the narrator's capacity to challenge his reader's preconceptions about who he is and who he is not.

The narrator's proclivity for memorization becomes so developed that it leads him to another repertoire of skills: mimicry and improvisation. By the time he was twelve years old, "había compuesto ya [...] muchas décimas de memoria, causa porque mis padrinos no querían que aprendiese a escribir; pero yo las dictaba a escondidas a una joven morena llamada Serafina" (Manzano 87). His memorization skills continue to evolve to such a degree that his masters eventually come to fear he could teach himself how to write. If he could improvise ten-line stanzas based on a mimetic reproduction of what he heard, he could potentially learn how to write following the same strategy of mimesis based on what he could see. As a result, he encounters his first obstacle: his masters forbid him from continuing to recite poetry. Instead of discouraging the protagonist from honing this skill, he continues to dictate those stanzas to a young woman, presumably a *mulata* like himself, in secret. This is the first passage in the *Autobiografía* where the narrator describes an instance when he directly disobeys an order from his masters. This representation of creativity early in the protagonist's life sets the stage for the more dramatic moment of defiance that will reappear toward the end of the narrative. This description plays another role: it is the first time the narrator makes the reader question the assumption that a fugitive slave like him always does as he is told. Even if it was done in secret, the protagonist shows how at an early age, he demonstrates a kind of resistance, a strategy of working around inescapable and constraining conditions. In the words of Donald Winnicot, this passage invites the reader to imagine this as a metaphorical representation of an enslaved subject's pursuit of a secret life. No one, aside from the *mulata*, knows what the protagonist is

doing in secret from his masters; it is meaningful because it is creative and original for him and no one else. This prompts the question: if the protagonist at the age of twelve was able to defy the orders of his masters, to demonstrate some kind of secret resistance to the interdictions of his masters, could the narrator not do the same with the Delmontine circle of *antiesclavistas* even while he is under their aegis?

The exposition includes three more examples in which the protagonist resumes his secretive approach to working around inescapable but pliable circumstances. While he executes his duties as a house slave, he simultaneously develops a secretive appetite for and consumption of his masters' world: "cuando almorzaban o comían, tenía cuidado de recoger lo que todos iban sobrando, me había de dar mi mana de engullírmelo antes que se levantase la mesa" (Manzano 89). I interpret this secret appetite for and consumption of leftovers from his masters' table as a metaphorical description of the strategy Manzano the narrator employs to insert himself in the society of free blacks in Havana. If the reader can visualize how Manzano the protagonist satisfies his appetite by secretly eating leftovers, this passage invites the reader to imagine how Manzano the *narrator*, in a similar way, satisfies his appetite for the culture of the enlightened Cuban criollo by feeding himself intellectually, feeding his moral development through the consumption of small fragments from the abundance of literature and philosophy found in the salons of Havana he was a part of – the table of the *antiesclavistas* – in order to write an anthology of poetry and eventually the *Autobiografía*. It further prompts the question: if Manzano the narrator could achieve this by consuming the scraps of the Enlightenment as a fugitive slave, imagine what he would be capable of if he were actually an emancipated black man, a member of liberal society?

This provocative suggestion is reinforced again through the following description of the protagonist's occupation of the domestic sphere. While the connection between Manzano the protagonist and Manzano the narrator is more implicit in the previous passage, the connection becomes more apparent in this following passage. No longer a metaphorical description, here the narrator explicitly explains that he has become a skilled tailor as a result of the attention he paid to his mistress when she carried out her duties as a seamstress: "llegada la hora de coser me sentaba a la vista de mi señora a costurar efectos de mujeres, *por lo que sé hacer* túnicos, camisones, colgaduras, colchones, marcar y coser en holán batista, y componer toda clase de guarniciones" [my emphasis] (Manzano 89). The description of the protagonist's voracious appetite for leftover food shortly before this description serves as a powerful metaphor that helps mobilize the idea that was implicitly suggested earlier: Manzano the narrator is consuming and becoming part of the culture of the white Cuban criollo. The narrator shows how his enslavement, his inescapable but pliable circumstance, did not disable the protagonist: his compulsive propensity for creativity was greater than the interdictions he encountered. In the following passage, the narrator describes how his meticulous attention to the drawing lessons his masters would receive and his secretive consumption of the scraps of paper that were left behind allowed him to become such a skilled *retratista* that he, once again, earned the recognition and amazement of his mistress and the portrait instructor:

> así por lo que veía hacer y oía decir, corregir y explicar, me hallé en estado de contarme uno tantos en clase de dibujo. [...] esperé a que botasen una muestra, y al día siguiente a la hora de clase después de haber visto un poco, me senté en un rincón, vuelta la cara para la pared: empecé haciendo bocas, ojos, orejas, cejas ect. [...] De este modo llegué a perfeccionarme en términos, que habiendo tomado una muestra desechada, pero entera, aunque no muy perfecta […] la copie tan al fiel, que cuando la concluí, mi Señora que me observaba cuidadosamente haciéndose la desentendida, me la pidió y se la enseñó al Maestro, que dijo saldría un gran retratista y que sería para él de mucho honor, que algún día retratara a todos mis amos (Manzano 89).

This anecdote serves as a hyperlink that points the reader back to an earlier passage in which the protagonist describes his superior memorization skills. Even though the protagonist was only able to watch the art lessons from the sidelines, even though he relied on whatever scraps of paper his masters left behind, he was able to exceed the expectations of his mistress who, "haciéndose la desentendida", shows his portrait to the portrait master who ends up commending Manzano for his superior drawing skills. The reader is invited once again to make the connection: if Manzano the protagonist was able to exceed his masters' expectations, one should consider how Manzano the narrator very likely knows more and is capable of more than the reader expects.

The protagonist's performance of creativity during his early adolescence plays such a formative role in the development of the narrator's subjectivity that when the reader arrives to the harrowing incidents that the protagonist experiences in Matanzas, the narrator points the reader back to the protagonist's compulsive propensity for creativity during his childhood in order to make sense out of the his resilience. The protagonist's performance of creativity that first appears in Havana *reappears* in the most desperate of circumstances in Matanzas:

> aunque acosado por tantos trabajos, eso no quitaba que a veces, siguiendo los impulsos de mi carácter, naturalmente alegre, pareciera mi alma en la mayor bonanza; así en la casa del Sr. Estorino, como que dicho que sabía algo de dibujo pintaba decoraciones en papel, hacía mis bastidores de güines, cañas de cigarrones o cujes de yaya, y figuras de naipes o de cartón [...] hacía títeres, que parecía que bailaban solos, de madera con un taja-pluma, y pintaba los hijos del Sr. D. Feliz Llano (Manzano 104).

In this passage, the narrator demonstrates how the protagonist's performance of creativity becomes an internalized quality. While the constraining conditions of his enslavement intensify, as they become more punishing and debilitating, the way the protagonist performs creativity shifts from a decisive action to the expression of an innate characteristic of who the protagonist is at his core. Following "los impulsos de [su] caracter, naturalmente alegre", the protagonist

creates artwork from scraps of paper, cardboard, wood for his own enjoyment. The sketching and puppet-making are not connected to any lucrative endeavor; he engages in these pastimes for the sole purpose of rendering his soul "en la mayor bonanza". The protagonist is able to endure the horrific incidents he experiences under the custody of the Marchioness de Prado by pursuing a life that is *personally satisfactory*. This performance of creativity leads the reader back to the first instance when the narrator describes his protagonist's creativity: his proclivity for memorization and imitation: "prohibióseme la escritura pero en vano; porque todos se habían de acostar, y entonces encendía mi cabito de vela, y *me desquitaba a mi gusto*, copiando las más bonitas letrillas de Arriaza, a quien imitando siempre, me figuraba que con parecerme a él ya era poeta, o sabía hacer versos" [my emphasis] (Manzano 105). Under the custody of D. Nicolás in Havana, the protagonist is transported, metaphorically and physically, back to when he first became aware of his special talent in memorization and mimicry and his compulsive propensity for creative living. What first began as recitation of sermons and the catechism and a secretive defiance of his masters' orders reappears as the redeeming quality that literally rescues and safeguards the protagonist when the debilitating brutality of his enslavement seems to have defeated him. In the narrative space, this is an example of how the protagonist's private pursuit of a personally satisfactory life that is performed in defiance of the interdictions of his masters functions as a form of psychological resistance to the oppression and constraints of his enslavement. In light of the transactional agreement between Manzano and the *antiesclavistas* for whom he was writing, the reader is once again prompted to connect the *protagonist's* performance of creativity to the *narrator's* performance of creativity. How does Manzano the narrator privately pursue a life that is personally satisfying in order to defy interdictions that constrain his ability to become a liberal subject?

In the following passage, the protagonist returns to Matanzas one last time and, due to the mercurial nature of his mistress, he finds an opportunity where he can pursue his writing endeavors more freely. The protagonist is depicted in a quasi-emancipated state: "[la Señora] perseveraba en no ponerme ni mandarme poner la mano encima, de suerte que me hizo olvidar con eso todo lo pasado [...] estaba como nunca de bien mirado y nada echaba de menos: hacíame el cargo de que ya era libre" (Manzano 112). In other words, Manzano the protagonist enters a set of conditions that bear resemblance to the ones in which the Manzano the narrator finds himself as he writes the *Autobiografía*: temporarily endowed with a comfortable level of autonomy and protected from corporal punishment, but still a slave. In this context, the limitations that constrain the protagonist's development have not disappeared, but the source from which they derive is different.

> En esta época escribí muchos cuadernos de décimas al pie forzado, que vendía: y Arraiza, a quien tenía en la memoria, era mi guía. La poesía quiere un objeto a que dedicarse: el amor regularmente nos inspira; pero *yo era demasiado ignorante*, y todavía no amaba: por lo tanto, *mis versos eran frías imitaciones*. Y si no me salían algunos muy malos, es menester atribuirlo a la extremada afición que tuve desde bien chico a leer cuando topaba leíble [my emphasis] (Manzano 113).

In the absence of explicit interdictions from his mistress, the protagonist is able to compose several leaflets of poems he knew by heart and sell them for his own profit. Based on the protagonist's performance of creativity described throughout the story, the reader knows that the protagonist is not constrained by an intrinsic character flaw or a lack of intellectual or moral development as a result of the brutality he experienced. The limitations that constrain the protagonist's ability to write poetry are not intrinsic, rather, they come from an awareness that his skillset is restricted to the realm of mimesis. His best work, what he can sell in the market of liberal society, is limited to what he can memorize, imitate, and assimilate, *not* what he can create himself. The protagonist is aware that the only way he can be recognized and valued by

liberal subjects is by imitating and reproducing the clothing, artistic techniques, and poetic styles that Cuban criollos recognize and value. Considering this, one can better formulate the question: if Manzano the protagonist is constrained by the awareness that he can only be recognized and valued by the degree to which he assimilates to the culture of his masters and consumers, is Manzano the narrator constrained by the awareness that his credibility as an autobiographer and trustworthiness as an emancipated man determined by the degree to which he conforms to the ideals and expectations of his antiesclavista reader? In other words, is the "mulatico fino" persona that the *Autobiografía* develops and showcases as the model example of a slave worthy of emancipation simultaneously Manzano's redemption as well as his greatest burden? This provocative question invites the reader to reflect on the way their own prejudice as criollos that relegate fugitive slaves as second-class citizens has replaced the brutal constraint that Manzano the protagonist experiences under the custody of his masters.[6] The *Autobiografía* invites the reader to deny or admit culpability through a strategy comparable to the plot in which Hamlet uses the *Murder of Gonzago* to make Queen Gertrude reflect on her actions. When Manzano the protagonist performs creativity as a way to resist the constraints and interdictions he encounters from his masters, the *Autobiografía* invites the reader to deny culpability, "*the lady doth protest too much methinks*", or question whether the *antiesclavista* has actually, to their own horror, become the narrator's new master. The reader formulates the question on their own, leaving them only with the horror of this realization and the reassurance of his deftly employed obeisance. Furthermore, the narrator demonstrates the competence he possesses in the process of becoming a participant of the society of liberal subjects to which his *antiesclavista* reader belongs to. The

[6] In *The Repeating Island*, Benítez-Rojo argues that as a result of the ethnocentric thinking of the European mother countries, white Caribbean creoles adopted an outlook towards slaves as undignified, second-class citizens: "the Afro-Caribbean was a lazy being, unenterprising, irresponsible, and likely to acquire all sorts of social defects" (66).

Autobiografía is a compelling narrative that convinces the reader of the protagonist's intellectual aptitude and moral development by the way it celebrates the protagonist's pursuit of a secret life that is personally satisfying to him. Based on this, the implicit message is formulated more as a recognition than a question: the narrator is committed in becoming a participant in the society of liberal subjects but the way he participates may very well derive from the pursuit of a secret life that is personally satisfying to him, *in defiance of* the interdictions and constraints that liberal criollo subjects impose on a "mulatico fino" like him.

The historical circumstances that enabled Manzano's participation in liberal subjecthood are relevant to our study. Adriana Bergero's meticulous analysis of the opportunities for social mobility that the urban space offered to a slave like Manzano at the beginning of the nineteenth century is pertinent to understanding the performance of creativity in the *Autobiografía*. Manzano the narrator writes and lives "en un punto de quiebre de las rutinizaciones normalizadas por la institucion de la esclavitud y que de esa fractura y reacomodamiento sacará impulso para imaginarse a sí mismo aun en pleno regimen esclavista" (Bergero 9). The narrator is able to create the "mulatico fino" that represents who Manzano the narrator *could be* in the society of liberal subjects of nineteenth century Cuba because he himself has participated in a new socio-economic space where his "playing the part" of a liberal subject is recognized and outshines the fact that he is still in fact an enslaved subject. In the porous urban space of Havana, his *impersonation* of a liberal subject through the performance of creativity takes center stage and by extension temporarily suspends any disbelief among other liberal subjects that he is not really part of that society. The credibility of this performance is intensified by the fact that Manzano receives concrete validation in the form of pecuniary compensation: "Manzano tiene aceso al dinero, práxis que a nivel de los imaginarios de la hora le induce a pensarse en la ciudad desde

mapas cognitivos donde ya despuntan fuertes fracturas de las rutinizaciones de la esclavitud ejemplar" (Bergero 10). Manzano's transformation from a house slave to a slaried tailor and shoemaker allow Manzano to enter a new social class of laborers and by extension give him a new, elevated status: "de las devalorizadas labores domesticas de la esclavitud surgía ahora una clase social de oficios–caleseros, sastres, panaderos y costureras, todos, oficios de Manzano–algunos con estatus profesional" (Bergero 16). These socio-economic changes that derived largely "de la nueva burguesía criolla que, gracias a su filiación neocolonialista, conseguiría un espacio económico y social alternativo al privilegio y nobleza de sangre peninsulares" (Bergero 12) created this opportunity for an enslaved subject like Manzano to imagine himself someone else, which is what the *Autobiografía* depicts to the reader through the "mulatico fino". As my analysis of this protagonist has shown, I am interested in exploring what the performance of creativity can stand for *metaphorically*. The fact is that the majority of the protagonist's performance of creativity is not connected to any pecuniary compensation. Most of the depictions of the protagonist's creativity coincide with moments in the narrative where the brutality of his mistress or the interdictions of his enslavement seem to have defeated the protagonist. The narrator places an emphasis on the pursuit of a secret life that is satisfactory to the protagonist *just as much as* the elevated status he acquires as a result of his professionalization. Yes, Havana represents social mobility, pecuniary compensation, status, and a simulated experience of liberal subjecthood. At the same time, there is a profound, symbolic significance that Havana holds for the narrator that goes beyond the aforementioned experiences.

Section IV: "lloraba a mares"

> Yo no estaba a gusto, y lloraba a mares cuando me acordaba de la estimación, que gozaba con mis otros amos en la Habana; pero lo que más me afligía era la larga distancia que me separaba de ellos (Manzano 108).

Since the beginning of the narrative, the tropes of filiation, attachment, and belonging unfold before the reader when the narrator describes his fondness of and filial attachment to his first mistress, the Marchioness de Jústiz de Santa Ana in Havana. I read this narrative as a journey of the protagonist's departure from and return to his place of shelter and belonging**.** Adriana Bergero identifies this same trope of nostalgic longing: "cuando le toca imaginar el sitio de su utopía, localiza esta en el espacio profundamente intersectivo de la ciudad" (8). The passage above coincides with a moment when the protagonist experiences a horrific display of brutality under the custody of the Marchioness de Prado in Matanzas. It is not clear whether the narrator is referring to his first mistress or the second time he was relocated to Havana, but it is clear the city is a kind of nucleus that serves as a substitute for the absent maternal figure that is described in the beginning of the narrative. Described as a child who is overwhelmed by the anxiety of being separated from his mother, the protagonist's distress serves as a metaphorical description of the narrator's own nostalgia for Havana. Not simply as a space where opportunities for social mobility are possible, the passage above conveys a deep, sentimental attachment, suggesting that Havana is also the nucleus of shelter and care for the protagonist. Through my parallel symbolic analysis of the protagonist's mistresses and Havana, I seek to bring the tension between individual and collective identity into relief. On the one hand, the protagonist's filiation to maternal figures is limited to an experience of isolation and disconnection from the rest of society. On the other hand, the protagonist also longs to belong to a collectivity, illustrated through passages like the one above in which Havana is characteristically plural and multifaceted. I am interested in exploring how the protagonist's journey espouses these two

different modalities of belonging and attachment and how this espousal emphasizes the importance of place in the experience of dwelling that dissertation explores.

Since the exposition, the narrator sets the stage for the development of the protagonist's filiation and attachment to the first maternal figure, his first mistress the Marchioness de Jústiz de Santa Ana. The protagonist's early childhood in Havana unfolds as a romanticized description of an idyllic past: "mi ama me tomó como un género de entretenimiento y dicen que más estaba en sus brazos que en los de mi madre [...] me llamaba el *niño de su vejez*. Crecí al lado de mi señora sin separarme de ella más que para dormir; pues ni al campo viajaba sin llevarme en la volante" (Manzano 84). While the descriptors "mi ama" and "mi señora" are not in themselves unique ways of referring to his former mistress, it is important to note that she is the only mistress Manzano refers to as "mamá mía". The filiation between the protagonist and this mistress is so strong that she assumes the role of his biological mother and to a certain degree takes the place of his biological father as well: "sucedió una vez que estando muy majadero me sacudió mi padre, pero recio; súpolo mi Sra. Y fue lo bastante para que no lo quisiera ver en muchos días" (Manzano 84). This image of a protective, benevolent maternal figure who carries infant Manzano in her arms, affectionately calls him by a term of endearment, and even displays a certain preference to be responsible for his protection and upbringing creates a personification of nurture and care that will serve as a placeholder later in the narrative. When the Marchioness de Jústiz passes away, the protagonist's display of grief suggests to the reader that his mistress's demise represents the protagonist's abandonment from his source of shelter and care: "a la mañana siguiente la vi tendida en una gran cama; que grité y me llevaron al fondo de la casa donde estaban las demás criadas enlutadas; que por la noche toda la negrada, sollozando, rezo el rosario: que lloraba a mares; y que me separaron entregándome a mi padre" (Manzano 86). This

vivid description of the protagonist's devastation in being abandoned by his mistress so early in the narrative serves as a foundation upon which the narrator elaborates the protagonist's later attachment to and fondness of the city of Havana: the first experience associated with Havana is warmth and safety.

This pattern of describing his mistresses as maternal, benevolent figures continues in the protagonist's journey to Matanzas. Every time the narrator describes the fondness, well-being, and security of the protagonist, it is always attached to a maternal representation of one of his mistresses. In the following description, there is a reappearance of the protective and maternal descriptors in his mistress in Matanzas that were also present in the descriptions of his mistress in Havana. The major difference is that the maternal benevolence of his mistress in Matanzas is developed in tandem with another motif that becomes a key feature in the characterization of the protagonist: differentiation and possession.

> De allí, algunos días me hicieron muchos mamelucos de listado de costa, y alguna ropita blanca para cuando salíia con la librea de paje para los días de gala, tenía un vestido de húsar, pantalon ancho de grana, guarnecido de cordón de oro, chaquetilla sin cuello del raso azul marino guarnecido de lo mismo, morrión de terciopelo negro galoneado con plumaje rojo y la punta negra, dos argollas de oro a la francesa y alfiler de diamantes. Con esto, y los teatros, paseos […] olvidé pronto mi antigua y recoleta vida, me puse alegre, y nada senti haber dejado la casa de mi madrina […] A los pocos días tuve por allá a la misma Senora Doña Joaquina que me trataba como a un niño blanco, me vestia, peinaba y cuidaba de que no me rozase con otros negritos: de la misma mesa, con en tiempo de mi Señora la Marquesa de Jústiz, se me daba mi plato, que comía a los pies de la Señora Marquesa de Prado Ameno […] Toda esta ecpoca la pase lejos de mis padres (Manzano 87)

The wardrobe of the protagonist serves as a striking visual indication, a notable marker that lets every other laborer know *not* who Manzano is *but to whom he belongs*. After being abandoned by his source of shelter and care, he reencounters another maternal figure who takes the place of his previous mistress by dressing him in a way that distinguishes him from other slaves and indicates that he owes his duty and loyalty exclusively to his mistress. The protagonist, still a

child and eager to find protection and shelter, is able to find respite and recover what he lost – the experience of belonging – by fulfilling a role in the mistresses' lives. That role the protagonist plays is becoming an object of admiration, a sort of plaything that his mistresses take pleasure in dressing up and parading around. The protagonist's experience of shelter and care becomes a conditional transaction: if he behaves in a way that pleases his mistresses, in return he earns the benevolence and protection that he longs for. This filiation to his mistress, as suggested by the way his clothing serves as a distinguishing marker, supersedes any filial connection to his biological parents or kinship with any of the other slaves in the plantation: "cuidaba de que no me rozase con otros negritos". In other words, the kind of shelter and care the protagonist finds in his mistress requires that he relinquishes the option to affiliate himself with the slaves of the field – Manzano's experience of shelter and care is contingent on the exclusivity of his possession.

There is another unique aspect in the protagonist's filiation to his mistress: the devaluing of the paternal figure. Among the "privileges" the protagonist earns as a result of his mistress's tutelage and protection, the protagonist is allowed to eat from the table of his masters. As a metaphorical description, this scene alludes to the parable of the wealthy man and Lazarus the beggar, a parable that Manzano would have been familiar with considering the descriptions of the narrator's Catholic devotion: "si me acontecía alguno de mis comunes y dolorosos apremios lo atribuía solamente a mi falta de devoción, o a enojo de algún santo que había echado en olvido" (Manzano 103). In Manzano's depiction, through her maternal benevolence in contrast to the wealthy man's avarice and selfishness, his mistress appears as a merciful figure, *superior to* her masculine counterpart in the parable. What this suggests is that the protagonist considers his filiation to a maternal figure to be more benign and suitable than any filiation to a paternal figure.

Manzano's biological father is referenced twice in the entire autobiography and both times, the protagonist's father is described as an austere, inconsiderate figure who punishes his son too harshly and prohibits him from engaging in innocent pastimes as a child: "habiendo pintado una bruja echándole una ayuda al diablo [...] mi padre con la austeridad de su carácter, me prohibió tomar inter el viviese los pinceles, me quitó la cajita de colores y la tiró al río, rompiendo así mismo la lámina que tanto había divertido" (Manzano 91). These early descriptions of his mistresses as benign maternal figures who dress him in fine clothes, share their food with him constitute the foundation upon which the protagonist's consequent journey unfolds.

This depiction of the protagonist as a child eagerly waiting to eat the same food that his mistress eats reappears as a point of reference later in the narrative when the protagonist develops a habit of stealing the leftovers left behind by his masters. In comparison to the depiction of the protagonist as a child who is allowed to eat the same food his mistress eats, the depiction of the protagonist as an adult stealing leftovers from the table of his masters serves as a juxtaposition that brings into relief the idea of nostalgic yearning into relief: Manzano the adolescent longs for the time in his life when Manzano the child felt nurtured and cared for. The narrative following the turn of events in Matanzas is transformed into a Homeric-esque odyssey in which the protagonist's journey home is punctuated with brief moments of nostalgic yearning for the benevolence he experienced as a child; that nostalgic yearning is manifested through the protagonist's reenactment of those moments. When the protagonist is relocated to Matanzas and the "story of his misfortunes" begins to take place, he turns to recitation and mimicry in spite of the interdictions he receives from his mistress: "como para estudiar las cosas que componía por no saber escribir, hablaba solo haciendo gestos y visajes, según la naturaleza de los versos, decían que era tal mi flujo por hablar que a trueque de hacerlo, hablaba con las mesas, con los

cuadros, con las paredes" (Manzano 90). This scene portrays the protagonist as an adolescent desperately looking for a means to alleviate, if not escape, the brutality and cruelty he is subjected to under the custody of his new mistress and the means through which he is able to obtain respite is by mimesis, a habit he developed as the page of the Marchioness de Jústiz. Under her custody, the protagonist attends a French opera as his mistress's page, an experience through which he first learned to memorize and mimic what he heard: "lleváronme un dia a la ópera francesa y vine remedando algunos; por lo cual aunque siempre era más por los sermones recibían mis padres las galas que recoge en la sala" (Manzano 85). The protagonist's mimetic recitation procures him his first experience of being heard and seen by his mistress; it is his first experience of validation. Fast forward to the relocation to Matanzas, the protagonist turns to mimesis, even if no one is there to listen to him, as a way to create a way of being-in-the-world that is personally satisfactory to him and simultaneously as a way to to find solace in the reenactment of his formative childhood experience in Havana. The narrative's thematic association between filiation to a feminine, maternal figure and the experience of shelter and care becomes more apparent in the following scene: "llegada la hora de coser me sentaba a la vista de mi señora a costurar efectos de mujeres, por lo que sé hacer túnicos, camisones, colgaduras, colchones, marcar y coser en holán batista, y componer toda clase de guarniciones" (Manzano 89). Here, the protagonist's behavior demonstrates an inclination, a certain preference to remain close to his mistress in order to find a sort of refuge within the feminine space that this maternal figure occupies. His mistresses procure him an experience of shelter and care *not only* through his filiation to each individual maternal figure but also through the milieu that surrounds those maternal figures. Wearing the clothes they make for him, eating the food they give him, imitating the performers he watches with them at the theater, watching them make "efectos de mujeres"

that he would eventually be able to make on his own… each one of these are fundamental components that constitute the protagonist's experience of belonging. The protagonist's performance of creativity is a quest to gain access to and participate in the realm of liberal subjecthood *just as much as* it is a quest to restore the experience of *being home* that he first experienced as a child.

Since the protagonist cannot actually return to that place and time, the protagonist's quest for restoration is achieved by means of substitution. From the beginning, the protagonist learns that substitution and replacement are his inescapable realities: the Marchioness de Jústiz replaces his biological parents who is then substituted by the Marchioness de Prado… The protagonist follows suit: through his exploration of alternative spaces and social circles, he gradually learns to substitute his filiation to a maternal figure with something else in order to experience shelter and care. While in Matanzas, the protagonist comes to a sort of realization, a confirmation of something he had known all along but due to his loyalty to his mistress, the Marchioness de Prado, had been unable to fully comprehend. Shortly after he is punished by his mistress for reciting poetry to other slaves, the protagonist comes to this realization while he reminisces about his time in Havana:

> así velaba desde mis más tiernos años la mayor parte de las noches en la Habana o en el Teatro, o en las tertulias de casa del Señor Marqués de Monte Hermoso, y de las señoras beatas Cardenas [...] donde quiera que fuese ibamos a hacer tarde y noche en casa de las Señoras Gomez en que se reunían las personas más conocidas y decentes del pueblo, a jugar partidas de tresillo, malillo o burro (Manzano 92).

The protagonist's interaction with the social space that extends beyond the feminine space occupied by his mistress broadens his understanding of belonging and brings under scrutiny whether the shelter and care he experienced under the custody of both his mistresses truly epitomizes the experience of "being home". Comparable to the way a prism bends a beam of

light, the detailed description of the urban space *refracts* the limited scope and breadth of shelter and care that the protagonist experienced as the property of his mistresses. The refraction that comes through *affiliation* with the society of "las personas más conocidas y decentes del pueblo" points to another way of belonging, another kind of shelter, that, unlike filiation to a mistress, allows for greater social mobility. The benevolence that the protagonist experiences under the custody of his mistresses hinges on their *exclusive* possession of his body and services. By contrast, the description of the urban space in Havana highlights the protagonist's movement between different sites and social circles. From the cosmopolitan crowd who attend French operas at the theater, to the sophisticated erudites who meet in salons to discuss philosophy, to the gatherings of pious Catholic women, to the numerous evenings of recreational entertainment, the protagonist learns about an entirely different world where he can quite literally wander through and pass by unnoticed. The protagonist is described as a spectator whose cloak of anonymity works in his favor, allowing him to blend in and pass as someone else other than the property of "the page of the Marchioness of X". In the urban space, the protagonist becomes a sort of *fulano de tal* – something that was forbidden under the watchful eye of his mistress.

What does this anonymity afford the protagonist? How does the urban space substitute the experience of shelter and care that the protagonist experienced through his filiation to his mistresses? During his adolescence, after he experiences the trauma of being tortured for several consecutive days, the protagonist is temporarily relocated to Havana and transferred to the custody of a new mistress, the seamstress of the Marchioness de Prado. It is important to notice the language the narrator uses to describe his new mistress: Señora Dominga is described as an *assessor* of his skills and talent.

> Sra. Dominga, mujer blanca, su costurera, tuve el grande honor de costurar en algunos túnicos de mi Señora, pues yo sabía, como dije antes, y sé de guarniciones, colchones,

> colgaduras de cama, coser en holanes, y hasta marcar en holan cambray, *lo que me era muy celebrado* en obsequio de la fina educación que me dio mi ama. [...] serví las bodas, y fui su paje de librea cuando [...]. Con esta ama mi felicidad iba cada día en más aumento haciendo que su familia me guardase *las más pulidas consideraciones* [my emphasis] (Manzano 105).

Before this moment, the only recognition and validation of the protagonist's superior mimetic skills had come from his mistress the Marchioness de Jústiz after his first experience as her page at the French opera. In comparison to that first moment of validation, it is clear that the protagonist experiences a greater sense of satisfaction from the laudatory remarks he receives from Señora Dominga *and* her family. While his mimesis was perceived as amusing entertainment by the Marchioness de Jústiz, his deftly employed skills as a tailor are recognized and celebrated by this new mistress. The protagonist is able to procure a sense of security and happiness through a concrete authentication – his ability to produce a variety of clothes and bedding – that he was never able to experience while he was the property of his past mistresses. While the shelter and care he experienced under the custody of the Marchioness de Prado depended entirely on her mercurial nature, that same experience with the Sra. Dominga was came to depend on his ability to blend into the commercial *and* domestic space by executing his talent as a skilled tailor. This alternative way of being-in-the-world, this new experience of belonging to a larger collectivity that recognizes him based on what he can do instead of who he belongs to fundamentally changes the protagonist's relationship with his mistress and the laborers in the plantation. Following this three-year period in Havana, Manzano the young adult, now a seasoned laborer and an experienced urban dweller, is relocated back to Matanzas with a heightened sense of self:

> me hallé al frente de los que me vieron nacer: y de tal modo que los oscurecía, sobresaliendo mi servicio: se les daba en rostro cuando tenían algún descuido con la exactitud con que llenaba mis deberes, lo cual me trajo gran ojeriza en la casa. [...] Como diez y nueve años contaba y tenía cierto orgullito en saber cumplir mi obligación, y no

> me gustaba que me mandasen las cosas dos veces, ni que me abochornan por trivialidades: pero el prurito de abatir el amor propio del que está más cerca de la gracia de su amo, es un mal contagioso que hay en todas las casas grandes (Manzano 107).

"Mi servicio", "mis deberes", "mi obligación" … the repetition of these phrases signal a shift in the protagonist's relationship to his environment: his affiliation with the class of skilled laborers has effectively substituted his filiation to his mistress. His self-identification is no longer tied to the treatment, protection, or care he receives from his mistress but rather from the degree to which his performance of skilled labor makes him stand out from the rest of the "unskilled" slaves of the plantation. His reluctance to tolerate humiliation by his masters derives from an awareness that someone else somewhere else does recognize and identify his capabilities. If it seems that the protagonist's sense of belonging and attachment is found outside the plantation, that is because it *already has* been relocated to Havana: "yo no estaba a gusto, y lloraba a mares cuando me acordaba de la estimación, que gozaba con mis otros amos en la Habana; pero lo que más me afligía era la larga de ellos" (Manzano 108). The esteem and respect that he experienced in Havana ends up surpassing any experience of nurture and care that he had under the custody of his first two mistresses. The concept of "being home" undergoes a transformation through the protagonist's journey to and from Havana: it is a collective place that the protagonist has been searching for since the beginning.

The last nail on the coffin of the protagonist's filiation to his mistress is represented in the following passage. Shortly after the demise of his biological mother, "lo único que tenía allí", the protagonist is unjustly deprived of receiving the money and gold his mother had left behind for him. His frustration with his mistress's injustice and his unrelenting desire to "desaparecer transplantándome a la Habana" brings him back to feet of the only person in Matanzas who could offer some respite to his afflicted soul. The protagonist reenacts the same exact scene he

experienced while he was a child, but on this occasion, the experience of nurture and care that *he would have* experienced as a child has completely disappeared:

> Cuando llegué a los pies de mi Señora me postré, pedí perdón de mi falta, me mandó sentar en el comedor; y en acabando de almorzar un abundante plato, que yo no probé. Mi corazón no era ya bueno y la Habana, juntamente con los felices días, que en aquella gocé, estaban impresos en mi alma, y yo solo deseaba verme en ella. Notó mi Señora el caso que yo había hecho de la comida y no dejó de maravillarse de que no se alegrarse el corazón un buen plato (Manzano 111)

The very same act of maternal benevolence that would have offered solace and respite to him as a child, being fed and invited to sit at the table to eat with his mistress, provides no such experience for the protagonist in this scene. The city of Havana and the happiness he experienced in that place have surpassed any act of maternal benevolence from any mistress. The phrase "solo deseaba verme en *ella*" emphasizes the protagonist's decision to substitute the person with the place to which escapes shortly thereafter.

Manzano the narrator values and prioritizes the pursuit of personal welfare by whatever means necessary at the expense of developing any identification with a collective based on shared experiences – that is, with other enslaved subjects like himself. As represented by the protagonist's journey away from filiation to Havana, at every single stage the protagonist's journey is driven by the pursuit of his personal welfare. The protagonist's choice to escape to Havana and locate that place as *his* home from the beginning of the narrative is a deliberate choice of self-preservation. In the words of Gerard Aching

> There is no denying that Manzano's sense of superiority illustrates the degree to which slavery's practices alienate enslaved subjects from personal and collective allegiances based on shared experiences of bondage and encourage slaves to pursue their personal welfare first. From within his enslaved condition, Manzano's most routine strategy for personal advancement included the obeisance that slave owners tended to reward (89).

Building upon the research of Carolina Rodríguez Tsouroukdissian who argues that "la vida del esclavo doméstico estaba marcada por la soledad y la superposición de trabajo y hogar en un

mismo ambiente" (43), Aching's own interpretation identifies the approach that would worked the most effectively within that condition of extreme isolation: self-preservation and personal advancement could only come from obeisance. As my analysis of the protagonist's filiation with his mistresses has demonstrated, the disturbing deference with which the narrator speaks about his mistresses and how the protagonist's first, most formative experience of shelter and care takes place under the custody of the Marchioness de Jústiz emphasizes this obeisance that Aching is describing. How could one imagine Manzano to develop a collective allegiance with other enslaved subjects who shared the experience of bondage and oppression in order to pursue self-preservation? A collective allegiance with other slaves for a slave in his situation could not serve as an effective tool for him to create a way of being-in-the-world that was personally satisfactory to him. I argue that the narrative shows how the specificity of place and the possibilities it lends to its participants becomes the single most important and most effective way to lead the protagonist to his self-preservation. Havana, a permeable and malleable site in which the protagonist is able to easily enter, become a part of, and execute his skills and talent to his full potential, is essentially the catalyst and the culmination of the protagonist's quest for self-preservation. While his experience of shelter and care initially depended on his obeisance to his mistresses, the subsequent substitutions and the protagonist's commitment to create existential meaning for himself eventually lead him to discovering another way of being-in-the-world that is more personally satisfactory. He discovers Havana and leverages its porosity and the anonymity it offers to him and situates that place as his new nucleus of shelter and care. The discovery of Havana as a *place* helps the protagonist to replace obeisance and filiation, the previous approach in his pursuit of self-preservation, with a superior, more effective alternative: affiliation and

belonging to a collective of other subjects who, like him, create existential meaning and ways of being-in-the-world by whatever means necessary.

CHAPTER 3: "The Place of Dwelling"

Introduction: The Place of Space in *Texaco*

My analysis of *Texaco* is built on this premise: the underlying theme of the narrative is *place*. In the field of Francophone Caribbean studies, *Texaco* is accepted as one the most exemplary elaborations of the *créolité* movement in which Patrick Chamoiseau was an active participant during its inception in the late twentieth century: "Chamoiseau's *Texaco* is widely accepted as the most concrete and complete elaboration of the ideals of Créolité" (Woolward 65). The significance of *créolité* and its various connotations will be revisited in greater detail later on. For now, I argue that the *créolité* movement was a pragmatic program whose aim was to reconcile Caribbeans – specifically Afro-Caribbeans – with their past while simultaneously recognizing the importance of the present: "the past is to be rehabilitated, the present celebrated. Thus, the *créolité* movement is a pragmatic programme, rather than the promise of prophecy" (Gallagher 37). Chamoiseau's association with *créolité* has, to a certain degree, distinguished his literary work from narratives that thematize place and in turn associated works such as *Texaco* with narratives that thematize time. *Créolité* is often depicted as a movement that "[focuses] somewhat less on space than on time, and less on place than displacement" (Gallagher 37) and créolistes have often been criticized for failing to "[problematize] [...] the notion of space (cultural or geographical, Caribbean or Creole?)" (Gallagher 40).

While *Texaco* does indeed demonstrate the need to reconcile the past with the present, I do not believe that this text is uniquely an elaboration of the ideals of *créolité*; nor do I echo the criticism that Chamoiseau's text fails to problematize the notion of space. My study focuses on the significance of space in the creation and experience of place whereas *créolité* "[focuses]

somewhat less on space than on time, and less on place than displacement" (Gallagher 37). The novel's unique treatment of time and displacement has been noted through a historiographic perspective. From this perspective, *Texaco* may be interpreted as a subversive text in response to the dominant historical narrative of the Antilles under the hegemony of the French Republic because it is about the valorization of space more than time:

> Le passé de l'île se voit donc soumis à l'Histoire de France […] Ce discours officiel et hégémonique impose donc une histoire dans laquelle la Martinique ne se reconnaît pas de façon systématique. De manière plus générale, l'histoire produite par les colonisateurs sur les colonisés est loin d'être véridique […] Ce discours officiel, erroné ou lacunaire, nécessite l'écriture d'une histoire autre, révélée le plus souvent au sein d'un texte romanesque, qui prend alors un caractère subversif vis-à-vis du récit national (Amand 1-2).

Martinique has been (and continues to be) subjected to a long history of political, social and linguistic hegemony largely due to its status as a French overseas department. The history of Martinique, along with other Windward Islands, is largely the history of the French Republic. Rather than being an active participant in its history (and therefore identity), Martinique has remained tethered to the Métropole and, therefore, tethered to the narrative the Métropole imposes upon the island. *Texaco* emerges as a counterpoint to the dominant narrative that the Métropole has imposed upon the French West Indies. In the same vein as Emilie Amand, Maeve McCusker also argues that *créoliste* literature such as *Texaco* generates an historical consciousness that deviates from the dominant historical narrative: "given that Caribbean history cannot be totally accessible to historians, the *créolistes* argue that it is primarily to the creative artist that the task of inaugurating a historical consciousness must fall" (McCusker *Recovering* 77). The novel offers an alternative to the dominant historical narrative by "[rejecting] the foundationalism of trees and roots, and [moving] towards a more rhizomatic and relational model of history" (McCusker *Recovering* 89).

On the topic of subverting conventions, there is another perspective that considers how Chamoiseau's novel participates within a larger European genre tradition while simultaneously asserting its own identity within this system of conventions:

> *Texaco* seems to follow the same developmental narrative as the European bildungsroman with the crucial qualification that, rather than remaining fixated on the personal development of an individual protagonist, *Texaco*'s narrative opens up — explicitly — to a collective or corporate development narrative; Marie-Sophie's story turns out to be the story of a storyteller, and the protagonist turns out to be Texaco as a whole (Rubenstein "Public Utility" 40).

There are many examples of how the bildungsroman was used as a model for character development. It first emerged as a "symbolic expression of the individual subject who is in the state of becoming, relative to the philosophical ideas of Western modernity" (Ilmonen 61). Furthermore, as a genre, the bildungsroman "institutionalizes the presentation of an emancipated, individual and coherent *Western self*" [my emphasis] (Ilmonen 61). This genre gained popularity in Caribbean literature during the 1980s, which coincides with a period when "themes [such] as migration, diaspora and dislocation [...] also became prominent in the region's fiction. [...] The same period saw the beginning of a quest for a shared, collective Caribbean past" (Ilmonen 62). How did the bildungsroman become a model for Caribbean literature's quest to consolidate a collective Caribbean past? This genre not only "[highlights] the developing 'I' emancipating itself as a true subject of humanist freedom", it also reserves "the position of individual subject [...] for a colonizer. Consequently, [...] the colonized subject develops to discover herself as an 'other'" (Ilmonen 63). The particular appropriation of the bildungsroman that interests me is how it has served as a model to develop a "collective or corporate development narrative" (Rubenstein "Public Utility" 40) in Caribbean literature.

According to Ilmonen, there are four major ways in which Chamoiseau's novel develops a collective narrative by using the bildungsroman as a novel: through collective memory,

folklore, counter-narratives, and relocation. In my study of *Texaco*, I focus on the latter idea: re-location. As described earlier, the 1980s is characterized by a "quest for a shared, collective Caribbean past." This political need to consolidate a collective past in Caribbean literature derives from the absence of a definite identification with place, location, and home in the Caribbean imaginary. Finding a home in the Caribbean, "moving away from dislocation is a central feature of the contemporary Caribbean postcolonial bildungsroman that distinguishes it from the traditional one" (Ilmonen 70). Not only does this focus on location displace the bildungsroman from its traditional use in Western literature; it also recognizes the longing for and the value of attempting to find a home in the Caribbean.

The Bildungsroman is an effective model for the quest and formation of an individual or collective Caribbean identity. *Texaco*'s quest to consolidate a collective identity does not preclude or relegate the quest for an individual identity to second place; these two discoveries can and often do take place in tandem. What stands out in the narrative of *Texaco* is that the quest for the discovery of the *collective* becomes the main objective that propels the narrative forward. Chamoiseau achieves this by de-centralizing the story of Marie-Sophie and making Texaco the shantytown become the protagonist. The analysis of *Texaco*'s appropriation of the bildungsroman through this shift in focus leads to a larger academic discussion concerning the use of European language and culture to represent a Caribbean identity. According to Simon Gikandi, the literature of Antillean writers such as Chamoiseau is motivated by "the need to inscribe Caribbean selves and voices within an economy of representation whose institutional and symbolic structures have been established since the 'discovery'" (Gikandi 10). I add a qualifier to this claim: Antillean literature in the late twentieth century is motivated by the need to inscribe Caribbean selves and voices *as a collectivity built upon a shared knowledge of place*

within an economy of representation. Symbolic structures such as the bildungsroman had been established since the "discovery" and these structures become displaced from their traditional use through the unique ways Caribbean writers appropriate them. The Caribbean artist's ability to produce a work that represents a collective consciousness or a shared knowledge of space is predicated on the artist's *individualized* way of producing something unique. Chamoiseau's text is a concrete example of this approach to produce a narrative driven simultaneously by the individual *and* the collective. One might think of *Texaco*'s quest for the formation of a collective identity and a shared knowledge of place is the result of a literary marriage between two specific ways Caribbean writers displaced symbolic structures in the past: the Spanish Caribbean romantic novel and the slave autobiographical narrative. While Avellaneda's *Sab* inscribes Cuban *criollos* in the economy of representation through its appropriation of certain tropes from European Romanticism, Juan Francisco Manzano's autobiography inscribes *himself* as an individual (not necessarily as a Caribbean self) in this same economy of representation through his appropriation of the autobiographical genre. *Texaco* produces an "autobiography of space" by recognizing the formative role the individual plays in the production of a narrative (like Manzano's autobiography) while at the same time moving towards the formation of a collective consciousness (like Avellaneda's novel) represented by the metamorphosis of Texaco: *the individual characters become the collective protagonist*.

Chamoiseau's autobiography of space destabilizes two ideologies. The first being that an individual's quest for self-representation is separate from the quest for the formation of a collective identity. The marriage between the Spanish Caribbean romantic novel and the slave autobiography dispels this notion. The second idea Chamoiseau's autobiography of space pertains to the importance of space itself: why does space even matter? To respond to this

question, I will read this text in conversation with the anthropological research of Christine Chivallon as well as some of the more contemporary research on the impact of globalization on "developing" communities in the Global South by scholars Ashley Dawson and Michael Rubenstein. Chivallon's research on the way the Martinican peasantry developed an economy of subsistence during the nineteenth century puts forward the argument that it is necessary to inhabit a place in order to generate a collective identity. In *Espace et identité à la Martinique*, Chivallon examines the ways in which the population of newly emancipated slaves developed a collective identity over the period of 1840 - 1960. Even though these former slaves possessed a new status within the French Republic – "citoyens" – there was very little that changed with regards to the prospect of property rights. Purchasing property was not possible without "la contrepartie d'énormes privations qui ont demandé de la part du petit cultivateur de l'époque une rigueur et des efforts incessants" (Chivallon *Espace* 70). In spite of this obstacle, the Martinican peasantry generated a collective identity that, according to Chivallon, was based on a process of in-*habiting* space (as opposed to the "dislocation" described by Ilmonen). The process of in-habiting the Martinican countryside will be explored in greater detail later on, but for the moment, I highlight the conclusion Chivallon comes to about the Martinican peasantry: "il n'y a pas d'identité venue à forme sans travail sur et par l'espace pour en signifier les constituants" (*Espace* 30). I interpret this "travail sur et par l'espace" as a version of "dwelling" because it is ultimately tied to humans' ability to create meaning from space. For the Martinican peasantry in Chivallon's study, the outcome of the "mise en oeuvre de la paysannerie" was "la production d'une identité collective" (*Espace* 32). This leads to the next point: *Texaco* describes how the process of creating and extracting meaning from space may serve to combat oppressive structures. In her article "Éloge de la 'spatialité", Chivallon argues that *Texaco* is " une

incroyable leçon de géographie étonnamment sensible à la façon dont l'identité se compose avec l'espace et le lieu" (114). Echoing the argument in *Espace et identité,* Chivallon argues that this text emphasizes the inseparability of identity (a type of meaning) and space and place. Furthermore, Chivallon makes an important observation about the text that is overlooked in much of the academic literature on this text: the struggle against "l'En-ville" is achieved through the recognition of the "lieu", or "place."

> Le refus du propriétaire béké, la menace des autorités conduisent à une succession incroyable de destructions et de reconstructions de l'îlot de cases, comme si le provisoire assigné avait le pouvoir de résister à l'ancrage. À force d'obstinations, la lutte avec l'En-Ville s'achève sur la reconnaissance du lieu (Chivallon "Éloge" 115).

As mentioned previously, so much of the critical work on *Texaco* emphasizes the question of literary genre and the bildungsroman. Chivallon's research puts forth the argument that is central not only to this chapter but to my dissertation as a whole: "il n'y a pas d'identité venue à forme sans travail sur et par l'espace pour en signifier les constituants" (*Espace* 30). From the long journey from the plantation to "l'En-ville" of Saint-Pierre, from Saint Pierre to Fort-de-France, from "l'En-ville" to the creation of Texaco the shantytown, from the subsequent struggles to preserve this community to the success in bringing electricity and running water to their "petit-cases"… Every movement and settlement described in the novel is connected to the longing for, struggle for, displacement from, redemption of, and recognition of the "lieu." This brings us back to the debated question in the context of globalization: what is the fate of space?

What is more important than the physicality of Texaco the shantytown is the nuance it adds to the academic discourse that addresses the rising phenomenon of displacement (or "dislocation") by means of urbanization and globalization. *Texaco* offers a counterargument to the claim that globalization negotiates the production of locality so that place cannot be created or sustained: "strategies of globalization undertaken by the state, capital and technoscience all

attempt to negotiate the production of locality in a non place-based way that induces increasingly delocalizing effects. In other words top-down globalization is insensitive to the specificity of place" (Cresswell 84). According to this perspective, place, the creation and extraction of meaning from space, the experience of "dwelling" and "home" will soon be extinct, or they already no longer serve a purpose in the present world. The argument that "place" is disappearing is made forcefully in the work of Zygmunt Bauman. He argues that globalization is a process through which people are parceled into different "zones" – the "globally mobile" and the "locally tied." The people who are parceled into the latter are "bound to bear passively whatever change may be visited on the locality they are tied to, the real space is fast closing up" (Bauman 88). Bauman argues that the emergence of "wanderers" or "vagabonds" is a way for these communities to escape the locality to which they are tied, to counter the dominant system that "parcels" the world into "zones": "if they are on the move, it is because 'staying at home' in a world made to the measure of the tourist feels like a humiliation […] they are on the move because they have been pushed from behind – having first been spiritually uprooted from the place that holds no promise" (Bauman 92). It is clear that the dominant spatial configuration of the "first world" of the twenty-first century favors and is created by those who have the ability to displace themselves while the fate of those who are "left behind," those who have to "stay put," is less fortunate and ultimately lethal: they "are crushed under the burden of abundant, redundant and useless time they have nothing to fill with. […] They can only kill time, as they are slowly killed by it" (Bauman 88). This interpretation of the spatial configuration of the globalized world renders the sites where the "locally tied" are confined to as dead ends, as locations of idle labor and toil without fruitful or useful outcome. Naturally, it makes sense why "wandering" and "displacement" would serve as an avenue to escape the "locally tied" zone.

In her article "Squatters, Space, and Belonging in the Underdeveloped City", Ashley Dawson makes an important observation about the future of rural communities over the past two decades: they are disappearing.

> policies implemented by international development agencies such as the World Bank have pushed poor subsistence farmers off their lands by the hundreds of millions and forced them into the derelict squatter camps that ring the megacities of the developing world. Every year, a staggering 20 to 30 million of the world's poor leave their villages and move to cities. The last century has, in other words, witnessed a process of accumulation by dispossession on an unprecedented scale (Dawson 17).

Rather than being indicative of the disappearance and irrelevance of "place", Dawson argues that this mass migration away from rural villages to urban metropoli is indicative of the evolution but continued importance of "place" within the context of globalization. She uses Chamoiseau's novel as an example:

> the cultural specificity apparent in *Texaco* suggests that globalization cannot be construed as a homogeneous or uniform process […] *Texaco* challenges this marginalization of the poor and of the cities in which they live by centering attention on the squatter citizen, a figure central to the urban imaginary of the twenty first century's global cities […] The struggles of such squatter citizens for resources and legitimacy will define the form and character of the global cities of the South and, by extension, the shape of modernity in the twenty-first century" (Dawson 18-19)

Dawson's research articulates a counterargument to the dominant narrative of dislocation and allows us to locate resistance to the dislocation caused by global economic forces. "Place" is not becoming extinct because "place" cannot be reduced to a physical site. Simply because rural villages, sites which often generate attachment and rootedness, are disappearing does not mean "places" are also disappearing.

Through my reading of Chamoiseau's text, I offer a counterpoint to this particular interpretation. I argue that the zone of the "locally tied", the place of the "squatter citizen" is not only an evolved version of "place" where dwellers can create and extract meaning, but it also serves as an avenue to escape the "parceling" of the modern world and simultaneously influence

the development of twenty-first century modernity. What may be interpreted as the gradual erasure of "anthropological spaces" (as defined by Marc Augé), I interpret more optimistically as the evolution of "place," as represented by Texaco the shantytown. In the words of Chivallon, it is ultimately through the recognition of the "lieu" that the struggle against the "l'En-ville" – the city – is achieved. Michael Rubenstein echoes this argument of the recognition of the "lieu" in the last chapter of the text *Public Works* in which he argues that what the citizens of Texaco the shantytown demand "is not independence […] but recognition: 'City was taking us under its wing and admitting our existence.' Not 'freedom from' say, the impositions of the City and the City's authorities, but freedom *in* them" (*Public Works* 178-180). In the novel, the recognition of humans' capacity to create meaning from space that the struggle against dispossession, displacement, and dis-identification is ultimately achieved. Whose recognition? The recognition of urban planners, government authorities, those who are "modern" citizens only in relation to those who are "globally tied."

My goal is to read *Texaco* as a sentimental and intellectual exercise that recognizes the act of dwelling, the creation and generation of meaning from one's immediate context. Although my analysis of *Texaco* focuses on Esternome's journeys during the "Temps de Paille", my goal is to examine the continuity of the patterns and movements the reader observes in the nascent period of Texaco the shantytown and how they reappear and fundamentally shape the shantytown during its latter stages, "Temps de Fibrociment" and "Temps de Béton". This emotional and intellectual exercise is performed in various contexts where the inhabitant is compelled to detach, disassociate, and alienate from the act of dwelling, if not done by brutal force. Could this novel serve as a speculative description of the ways in which the twenty to thirty million subsistence farmers who have been forced to abandon their rural villages and settle

in squatter communities develop meaningful ways of being-in-the-world? In other words, how does *Texaco recognize* the legitimacy of the "home" of those who are displaced, dislocated, and "parceled" into zones that are "underdeveloped", "insalubrious", and ultimately "unhomely". The "dwelling" of these communities offers a counterpoint to the two options for survival offered by the "developed" world: "*stay put and die*" or "*wander aimlessly indefinitely*". This novel, in response to these two options, recognizes a third option.

First, I argue that how dwelling is manifested is contingent upon the dominant spatial configuration of its context. This novel does not preach about a "return to" a quaint, provincial life in rural villages and communities. That would be a misreading of this text. What was considered to be the "dominant" spatial configuration for a laborer in nineteenth century Cuba was entirely different for a land-owning *criollo* in that same context. For a laborer like Manzano, his connection to the plantation site was not formative in the development of his identity as a man of letters. For *criollos* such as Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda, on the other hand, rooting herself in the site of the small-scale plantation, inhabiting the site, was very important for the development of her identity as a Cuban *criolla*. As for the narrator of Chamoiseau's novel, Marie-Sophie Laborieux, it becomes clear that she wants neither exclusion from nor integration into the dominant spatial configuration – "l'En-ville." Rather, what she seeks is *recognition* of Texaco *in* Fort-de-France. All of these ways of being-in-the-world are acts of dwelling because they created meaning from the dominant spatial configuration that affects each of them, respectively. That is precisely what I will examine throughout this novel. The plurality of the contexts, both physical and historical, described in this novel will further strengthen my argument that the way meaning is created from space is contingent upon the dominant spatial configuration. Furthermore, the conclusion of the novel illuminates the degree to which a

specific kind of dwelling, the act of staying put, putting down roots, and attaching oneself to a physical site, has been and will continue to be the most important way to counter the most hostile effects of globalization: displacement, detachment, and disassociation. To continue to dwell in spite of the adverse circumstances of globalization and urbanization is not simply an act of survival for so many communities; it also serves as a strategy to *redirect* the trajectory of globalization in the twenty-first century. Recalling the words of Zygmunt Bauman, "modernity […] tore apart the connection between social interaction and physical proximity". If modernity set into motion the phenomena of displacement, detachment, and disassociation, must that necessarily mean that it is irreversible or unchangeable? I argue that there is a way to redirect this erasure of "placiality" and "home". *Texaco* recognizes an alternative mode of existence that is neither of constant displacement nor permanent confinement. Far from halting globalization and urbanization, this narrative recognizes a new "zone" within the spatial configurations created by globalization and urbanization, integrating aspects from them while at the same time deconstructing them to make them fit with their definition of "dwelling".

Part II: Patrick Chamoiseau

The way "place", "home", "attachment", and "belonging" are figured in *Texaco* can be linked to an identitarian crisis experienced in Martinique in the mid-century. Like the majority of French West Indian writers, Chamoiseau was influenced by the literature and language of France. Dominique Chancé and Celia Britton illustrate this through an analysis of Chamoiseau's characters, such as Marie-Sophie Laborieux: "it would be difficult to find any characters who were not fascinated by France, by its language and literature—starting with the writer himself, and with Marie-Sophie whose favorite authors are the same as those cherished by Chamoiseau" (Chancé et al 108). The degree to which French language and culture influenced the writer's

early and possibly later works is a study of the author's personal engagement with the literary movement of *créolité*. As one of the founding members of créolité, Chamoiseau's works participate in and draw from this literary movement to a great degree. It is important to understand the central tenets of this literary movement and how they influence the author's works *in tandem with* a careful analysis of the intersectionality of the author's upbringing. What was the political, social, economic environment in the French West Indies during the mid-twentieth century? Specifically, where did the author grow up within that political, social, economic context? In what concerns my study of Chamoiseau, my interest lies more with the degree to which these aspects may have informed the way the author figures "home", "attachment", and "belonging" in his work. The author's childhood

> coincided with the pivotal years of 1958-1964 […] marking the transition from the traditional agriculture-based economy of the past to the 'massive tertiarized, consumer-oriented economy of the contemporary DOM' […] Martinique began a process of bétonisation or urban development, which has eroded the natural landscape and undermined the ecosystems of the island (Knepper 10-11).

The fact that Martinique began this transition is highly pertinent to my analysis of *Texaco*. The drastic changes in the environment (social, economic, and natural) that took place during Chamoiseau's childhood are indicative of a sort of identitarian crisis.

Prior to the 1950s, Martinique was quite distinct. During the period of 1848 – 1946, Martinique was still, for the majority, an agriculture-based economy that, according to Christine Chivallon, was a thriving economy of *self-subsistence*. There was certainly a consumption of foreign manufactured goods in the French West Indies before the 1950s; however, the over-consumption of imported, manufactured goods did not begin until the mid-twentieth century. The *poste-esclavagiste* period up until the 1950 was unique because although emancipation had "freed" laborers from agricultural labor in the plantations, agricultural production was still taking

place all over the island. The recently emancipated slaves, *les Nouveaux Libres*, were "enclins à se rentrer dans les mornes et à développer une économie d'autosubsistance qui les libère véritablement de la tutelle de la plantation" (Chivallon *Espace* 153). This return to the countryside in which production took place without the constraints of a hierarchical system like the plantation resulted in "une marge *d'autonomie*, une capacité à développer une économie […] qui n'est plus celle de la plantation souveraine mais celle d'un groupe dégage de son emprise" (Chivallon *Espace* 26).

Why does all of this matter? It matters because the period of 1958-1964 described by Knepper was not *only* a transition from an agriculture-based economy to a consumer-based economy; this period of transition was *also* a destabilization of the identity of French West Indians as capable of creating meaning from their environment through their "économie d'autosubsistance". Returning to the period in which Chamoiseau was born and raised, the 1950s was characterized by the destabilization of this identity of self-subsistence: "les déséquilibres ont surgi de l'éviction quasi-totale des Martiniquais du procès de production pour les faire devenir les bénéficiaires de transferts sociaux propices à une surconsommation" (Chivallon *Espace* 22). Chamoiseau's childhood coincides with this specific moment in Martinique's history. It coincides with an identarian crisis: Martinicans were being "evicted" from the process of production – whether that be the production of agriculture, clothes, houses, and entire communities – by means of the "massive tertiarized, consumer-oriented economy of the contemporary DOM."

This destabilizing transition period coincides with the advent of a literary movement that Chamoiseau initiated in tandem with other French West Indian writers: créolité. Studying the seminal text *Éloge de la créolité* is the first step in understanding the origins and fundamental

ideals of this movement as well as the author's personal relationship with this movement. However, the authors' decision to confine the *Éloge* almost exclusively to a *Francophone* literary universe does not necessarily mean *Créolité* is an exclusionary identitarian manifesto. This is where the socio-economic transition that took place in the French West Indies becomes particularly important. The use of the French language has two major functions for the *Créolité* movement. First, the deliberate use of the French language in this literary manifesto can be interpreted as a "need to inscribe Caribbean selves and voices within an economy of representation whose institutional and symbolic structures have been established since the 'discovery'" (Gikandi 10). Creolists' use of the French language, far from being exclusionary, was a purposeful appropriation of the institutional and symbolic structures of their former colonizers to provide a platform for them to gain a sort of legitimacy. That said, Raphael Confiant decided to write in Martinican creole. For these and many other Francophone Caribbean writers and intellectuals, "creolization has come to represent a unique kind of Caribbean modernism, one that resists the colonizing structures through the diversion of the colonial language and still manages to reconcile the values of European literacy with the long-repressed traditions of African orality" (Gikandi 16).[7] One of the primary goals was reconciliation. The second, and the most important for *créolistes*, is that it conveys the longing of having an identity to hold onto. The destabilization of the French West Indian identity as a producer was not confined to the period of 1958 – 1964 but continued with the emergence of other forms of new imperialism such as global capitalism and departmentalization: "creolization

[7] It is important to note that not all créoliste writers wrote in French. Scholars can find ample evidence of Francophone Antillean and Gyanese writers who wrote in the vernacular *kreyol* in the anthology *Lettres Créoles: Tracées Antillaises et Continentales de la Littérature, 1655-1975* curated by Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant. I refer GIkandi's research to emphasize the way Francophone Antillean writers instrumentalized the French language to consolidate a collective identity.

is a form of world interaction that offers a positive alternative to forms of social injustice the author sees associated with global capitalism and new forms of imperialism" (Knepper 24-25). *Créolité* was confined to the Francophone literary sphere *not* because it seeks to exclude artists in the Spanish, English, and Dutch West Indies who are undergoing the same destabilizations. Rather, as a collectivity, the goal of creolists such as Chamoiseau was to counter the destabilizing effects of the various forms of new imperialism that had been taking place, but not exclusively, in the French West Indies *by means of* generating a collective identity.

By "collective identity", I am referencing and building upon a specific passage from *Eloge* that has been the subject of critique in the field of Caribbean studies: "[il faut] y retourner, ou, pour d'abord rétablir cette continuité culturelle […] sans laquelle l'identité collective a du mal à s'affirmer. Y retourner, oui, pour en enrichir notre énonciation, l'intégrer pour la dépasser" (Bernabé et al 36). In order to understand exactly what the creolist authors mean by *identité collective,* let us consider what their interpretation of *antillanité* is :"le concept l'Antillanité nous semble donc d'abord géopolitique. Dire 'antillais' ne révèle rien de la situation humaine des Martiniquais, des Guadeloupéens, ou des Haïtiens" (Bernabé et al 33). A term coined by Edouard Glissant, *antillanité* is the identity that emerges from an *involuntary, uncontrolled* reconstruction of the disparate components of the Caribbean, or "l'autre Amérique". In the words of Glissant, the Antillean

> conçoit que la synthèse n'est pas l'opération abâtardissement qu'on lui disait, mais pratique féconde par quoi les composantes s'enrichissent. Il est *devenu* antillais […] l'idée de l'unité antillaise est une reconquête culturelle […] c'est une idée qui ne peut pas être prise en compte *pour nous, par d'autres* : l'unité antillaise ne peut pas être téléguidée (*Discours* 16).

This passage echoes the concept of "Relation": a process by which the impulse to move "vers l'Un" – a uniform, sterile identity – is prevented by means of "le Divers", which represents

"l'effort de l'esprit humain vers une relation transversale" (Glissant *Discours* 190). This helps illustrate how *antillanité* and the latter movement *creolité* differ: créolité is more concerned with the construction of a "here-and-now" than the movement towards a "relation transversale." First, *antillanité* depends on the presence of *other* communities. The only way for a Martinican to become aware of their identity as "Antillean" is in relation to, in comparison to, in contrast with *other* peoples and communities *elsewhere*. Glissant argues that this process of becoming aware of French West Indians' *antillanité* usually occurs in the Metropole: "C'est en France le plus souvent que les Antillais immigrés se découvrent différents, prennent conscience de leur antillanité" (*Discours* 34). In other words, it is in turning *outwards, away from* themselves that Caribbean people become aware of their *antillanité*. As an identity, *antillanité* does not emerge from a discovery or reconnection with obscure or inaccessible aspects in the history of Martinique, Guadeloupe, ect… It is the outcome of displacement, alienation, and estrangement from "le connu". The second, and perhaps the most important, feature of *antillainté* is that this process *cannot* be directed or controlled. If the process by which a French West Indian becomes aware of their *antillanité* is by means of *another*, *outside* of their immediate reality, the outcome is essentially the production of disparate, constantly evolving variables. Consequently, what *antillanité* looks like and how *antillanité* behaves will be, for lack of better words, largely out of the control of the one whom the *antillanité* is identifying. At the same time, Glissant argues that "l'unité antillaise ne peut pas être téléguidée." The word choice "téléguidée" suggests that the direction in which antillanité moves is determined by *locality* and *proximity*. In conclusion, Glissant argues that the French West Indian becomes *antillais* by means of an alternating movement: by turning *outward* and, at same time, staying *close to* the movement. However,

Glissantian line of thought does *not* envision *antillanité* as a "construction" that comes from taking stock of what the French West Indian has access to.

Here, I am interested in examining what this "becoming" Antillean implies about the French West Indian's *deliberate, intentional* process of creating meaning from space. To be more explicit, what I mean by "creating meaning from space" references creolists' concern with cultivating a form of inhabiting that that attunes itself to the particularities of the specific place so as to anchor itself in it. Considering this, *Eloge*'s criticism of *antillanité* is based on the premise that it constrains how "dwelling" can take place for Caribbean peoples. Through its emphasis on the outside, elsewhere, and other peoples and places, *antillanité* depreciates the importance of the Caribbean space and limits the process of introspection. Through its unpredictability and opacity, *antillanité* can invalidate the longing for belonging, attachment, rootedness, and ultimately stability as well as hindering the individual who is trying to create and nurture this experience. In short, *antillanité* is not compatible with the "identité collective" that the authors seek to affirm in the aforementioned passage. *Créolité* is more compatible with the cultivation of a collective identity grounded in a place than *antillanité*: "[il faut] y retourner, ou, pour d'abord rétablir cette continuité culturelle […] sans laquelle l'identité collective a du mal à s'affirmer. Y retourner, oui, pour en enrichir notre énonciation, l'intégrer pour la dépasser » (Bernabé te al 36). The pronoun "y" is not a physical location that the authors are referencing. Rather, the authors are referencing the unfulfilled, marginalized, depreciated *longing* to generate a collective identity that is derivative from a rootedness in, an attachment to a *fixed, definite* place. How could this collective identity be derived from an intimate connection to a fixed, definite place? The very next sentence states that in fulfilling this longing to generate a collective identity, they will eventually "depasser" this identity. There is room for interpretation here, and

my analysis of Patrick Chamoiseau's novel supports this claim. The verb "depasser" can mean "to overtake" or "to leave behind". The verb "depasser" can also mean "to exceed" or "to surpass". The second definition of the verb is more pertinent for two reasons. First, the *créolistes* are writing during a period when they are witnessing, for a lack of better words, a loss of identitarian markers based on their local ties.

By the 1980s when the *Eloge* was written, the effects of this destabilization had become intensified along with the de-localizing effects of globalization:

> strategies of globalization undertaken by the state, capital and technoscience all attempt to negotiate the production of locality in a non-place-based way that induces increasingly delocalizing effects. In other words, top-down globalization is insensitive to the specificity of place (Cresswell 84).

The authors are conveying alarm in light of these drastic changes. This is one of the reasons why "dépasser" does not necessarily mean that the authors imply a sort of abandonment of place, locality, and the specificity of the Caribbean altogether. As a conception of growth, "dépasser" is more in line with the reality of the context in which they were writing. The situation was already too destabilizing, in what concerns the cultural, social, and physical space of the French West Indies at the end of the 1980s. I echo the interpretation of the *créolité* literary movement offered by French Caribbean scholar Mary Gallagher. It was a "pragmatic" program: "the past is to be rehabilitated, the present celebrated. Thus the créolité movement is a pragmatic programme, rather than the promise of prophecy" (Gallagher 37). The circumstances that were affecting the French West Indies at that time necessitated a kind of pragmatic program that could temporarily alleviate the identarian crisis. In that program, a rehabilitation of the past was one major component. However there is a point at which the literary movement of *créolité* and *Texaco* diverge. While *créolité* "[focuses] somewhat less on space than on time, and less on place than displacement" (Gallagher 37), *Texaco* goes great lengths to recognize the ever-present

importance of the specificity of place, of locality, during the 1980s. *Texaco* describes the role that place has in responding to the crises taking place in the French West Indies, and by extension, in the developing world.

Texaco conveys an urgency to return to the recognition of locality, to the specificity of place. Chamoiseau's formative childhood experience that coincided with the transition period of 1950-1960s speaks to the specificity of place in Martinique that the author represents in *Texaco*. The novel is divided into different periods of transition – "the age of straw", "the age of cratewood", "the age of cement" – many of which bear resemblance to the transition from traditional agriculture-based economy to a consumer-based economy that took place during the 1950s in Martinique. In short, the very structure of the novel points to the creation and securing of a fixed attachment to Martinique as the island undergoes different periods of transition. This connection between the period 1958-1964 and the novel's own time frame becomes more evident through the author's return to this very issue later on in his professional career. After he had undergone what he calls "a kind of prise de conscience in 1976 at the age of twenty-three […] 'Ma lutte contre la domination avait porté des fruits rebelles'" (Knepper 15-16). When the author wrote *Écrire en pays dominé* in the 1990s, one begins to see how "ecological concerns, urban development, and the impact of tourism inform Chamoiseau's concerns with the places and histories that shape the real and imagined spaces of this tiny island" (Knepper 22). In other words, his focus turns back to "home", to the specificity of place. How the island is being shaped by and ultimately eroded by multiple factors, both environmental and economic, becomes a major concern for Chamoiseau in his later career. This is demonstrated most clearly through his involvement in the creation of "MODEMAS (Mouvement des Démocrates et des Écologistes pour une Martinique Souveraine), an eco-political party that regularly comments on

developments in the built and natural environment" (Knepper 22). This is the key feature about Chamoiseau: while he engaged in a sort of militant "lutte contre la domination" like many other Francophone Caribbean writers, he returned to the "concerns with the places and histories that shape the real and imagined spaces of" Martinique. During an interview in March 2000, Chamoiseau describes a sense of urgency for developing a connection to "*lieux*": "il faut prendre la racine, s'enraciner dans les lieux, nommer les mornes, nommer les endroits, partir toujours d'un bout de réel et l'amplifier. Et ça, c'est salutaire pour nous" (McCusker "Problématique" 730). This emphasis on "s'enraciner dans les lieux" is often sidelined in the criticism of his engagement in the *créolité* movement and how the novel *Texaco* repurposes the genre of the bildungsroman.

The kind of rootedness in space that Chamoiseau seeks and advocates for is connected with the value of fiction and the imaginary. In this same interview, when asked about the "va-et-vient constant entre la fiction et la réalité" that emerges through the description of the fictional and real sites (or "imagined and real spaces") in his novel, Chamoiseau argues that there are two reasons for this "hallucination entre le réel et l'irréel". First, Martinique is a country that "subit des dominations silencieuses, il faut déchirer le réel […] on met en doute le réel, on déplace le positionnement du réel pour le situer dans une perspective qui permet de considérer le réel autrement" (McCusker "Problématique" 729). In an allusion to his text *Écrire en pays dominé*, Chamoiseau argues that "dominations silencieuses", such as departmentalization, have prevented Martinicans from developing a fondness with Martinique, from experiencing it as a place.[8] The

[8] In *Écrire en pays dominé*, Chamoiseau describes departmentalization as a sterilizing presence: "nous entrâmes dans l'assimilation à notre Centre en âmes creuses, désactivées, squatteuses […] ainsi la départementalisation nous stérilisa. […] Nous désertons nos aptitudes intimes. Nous nous amputons des entrelacs de notre diversité pour une greffe dévote des valeurs du Centre" (246-247). He argues that Fanon had in a way foreshadowed that this would happen, but in spite of this warning "ils se déployaient sans violences coloniales. Seule agissait la

"réel" of Martinique is perceived as hostile, traumatic, or simply undesirable. Therefore, through the text's "hallucination" of fiction and reality, imagined and factual, the reader can consider an "alternative reality" to the one to which they are accustomed.

Chamoiseau makes another important claim with regards to "place" in his explanation of the blurring of fact and fiction. He opines that

> souvent la littérature antillaise est désincarnée. Les gens ont tellement peur de ne pas être universels, ont tellement peur d'être régionalistes ou exotiques, qu'ils préfèrent écrire des histoires un peu désincarnées comme ça. Alors que je crois qu'il faut prendre la racine, s'enraciner dans les lieux, nommer les mornes, nommer les endroits, partir toujours d'un bout de réel et l'amplifier. Et ca, c'est salutaire pour nous (McCusker "Problématique" 730)

It is necessary to "prendre la racine", to become attached to, rooted "dans les lieux" and "nommer les endroits". What does that mean? Specifically, what does Chamoiseau mean by "lieu"? I interpret Chamoiseau's idea of the "lieu" through Marc Augé's term "anthropological space":

> localized, occupied, familiar, organic, historical and meaningful to its occupants and visitors, 'a space where identities, relationships and a story can be made out' […] Place, here, is associated with prolonged fixities and practices of dwelling; echoing humanistic ideas and those associated with Martin Heidegger (Merriman 29)

There is no possibility to extrapolate or amplify without an attachment to the "lieu", not as an impermanent, indefinite site, but as a localized, familiar, organic, historical, *meaningful* place for its inhabitants, a place characterized by fixity and dwelling, a place that is nurtured and cared for while it simultaneously serves as a long-term shelter, a "home" for those who live therein. In the same interview, Chamoiseau argues that eventually "la revalorisation de la langue créole, la préservation interne des choses, l'inventaire des traditions" will no longer be required only if

convergence d'une incompréhension dépréciation de nous-mêmes et l'attirait des valeurs dominantes" (Chamoiseau *Écrire* 246-247).

"nous parvenons à *valoriser le lieu*, on n'en aura plus besoin de le faire" [my emphasis] (McCusker "Problématique" 731). In order to acquire the recognition from the urban planner (and by extension "l'En-ville"), in order to procure running water and electricity to Texaco the shantytown, in order to disrupt the narrative that the lives of the "locally tied" are destined either to be "killed by time" or wander aimlessly forever, there must be a valorization of the "lieu".[9]

Part III: In and around "l'Habitation"

The narrative begins with the story of Marie-Sophie's father, Esternome. His experience starts in the "Grande-case", which has been translated as "the Big Hutch" by Réjouis and Vinokurov. The word "case" can be translated in a number of ways. It can mean "compartment", "square", "box", "hut" or "hutch". What all these terms share in common is the notion of "containing" or "withholding". The "case" is something that contains, holds objects, ideas, information. That is precisely how Esternome depicts his experience in the "grand-case": as a constant ongoing discovery of things and objects that amazed and inspired him. According to Esternome, "seul le métier de découvreur des majestés de la maison lui suscita quelque intérêt […] Il se demandait quelle qualité de force avait pu élever cela, associer ces essences,

[9] On one level, following the creolist tradition, *Texaco* is deeply concerned with recovering memories that have been "left out" in order to offer a different, revised vision of space in Martinique. It can be argued that recovering these memories, following the central tenets of the literary movement of créolité, promotes revisionism and rehabilitation of the plantation system (Gallagher 33). I agree that to a certain degree the narrative is concerned with establishing a kind of continuity between the past and the present and that in doing so, the narrative dwells on this spatial configuration that caused so much trauma in the collective psyche of the French West Indian. How can there ever be a holistic recognition of the "lieu" without a meticulous reexamination of past experiences, including those that were fraught by a prevalence of violence and brutal dehumanization, and how they shaped the present? However, the narrative of this novel should not be reduced to a quest to procure a "corrected" vision of the present, a more accurate understanding of the "real and imagined spaces" of Martinique. This novel is more concerned with the specificity of place, locality, and temporality. At every phase in the narrative, there is an ongoing conflict between the narrator's desire to stay put, to hold on, and a desire to escape, to let go. This ongoing conflict validates the longing and quest to create and "valoriser le lieu."

domestiquer ces vents, ces ombres moelleuses et ces lumières" (*Texaco* 60). The architecture of the "Grande-case" inspires admiration in the mind of Esternome. He is fascinated by the majestic treasures that the "Grande-case" contains, he is intrigued by the intelligence and skill that was required to construct such an edifice. Later on, this experience sparks his imagination as to how it would be possible to assemble various elements into a structure that domesticates the natural environment that surrounds it. Even though Esternome failed to "glimpse the chance to oppose the very system from within", his coming into contact "with the skeleton of the house itself and the fortification with which it is surrounded", his admiration of "the colonizer's apparent success in mastering his environment" (McCusker "Constructing" 48) influenced his career as a builder later on in his life: "à mesure-en mesure, sa science des constructions devint particulière, accordée aux manières du vent et de la terre en ce pays de nouveautés" (*Texaco* 77). It is important to consider the connotation of Chamoiseau's descriptions in these previous two passages: "associer ces essences", "domestiquer ces vents", "accordée aux manières du vent et de la terre". Esternome's observation of the "grande-case" produces a unique sort of admiration and intrigue. The sight of the structure strikes a chord within the observer, sparks his curiosity whose existence in the dominant spatial configuration of the plantation system was most likely limited to sites of labor and production. What he did with his body and what spaces he produced was entirely determined by a system that fundamentally denied him agency or ownership of his body let alone the spatial configuration he was confined to. Up until that point, Esternome had never come into contact with a mode of existence, the "grande-case", that demonstrated the physical transformation of space *for the sole purpose of* "being-in-the-world," not for the purpose of exploiting or subjugating the earth and not for the purpose of restricting humans to fixed parameters. The "Grande-case", in the eyes of Esternome, is a concrete manifestation of a "way

of being-in-the-world" that simultaneously releases the forces of nature and harnesses them to safeguard *itself* as well as the earth. In other words, it creates an opportunity, opens an avenue where *attachment* to or *rootedness* in space can take place. This is the site where Esternome first witnessed a concretization of "sparing and preserving", a physical manifestation of "dwelling".

This description of the master's house, the "Grande-case", through the eyes of Esternome, a house-slave, is not meant to replace the reality of the fundamentally exploitative plantation system. Differing perspectives suggest that, to a certain degree, by portraying the plantation as a shelter, texts such as *Texaco* "[replace] the harsh realities of toil and exploitation in the canefields with the altogether more clement and congenital connotations of residence" (Gallagher 153). After all, according to Glissant, the plantation was fundamentally "confiné dans un lieu clos […] dont le mode technique de production est non évolutif parce qu'il est basé sur une structure esclavagiste" (Gallagher 146). However, it would be an oversimplification to categorically relegate Esternome's description to a "rose-tinted lenses" scenario.

Esternome is aware of his privilege of being a house slave and conveys this regretfully to his daughter: "avec une tristesse incrédule, il m'avouait avoir été un vrai nègre Grande-case. Son ambition plafonna aux disputes en cuisine pour les restes de la table" (*Texaco* 61). Esternome develops an air of superiority over the field slaves from his awareness of being a house slave, so much so that he would exploit his privilege during disputes on who would get the leftovers after their meal. Still, Esternome was aware of the torture and exploitation to which plantation slaves were subjected, in spite of his privilege of being a house slave. Esternome proceeds to tell Marie-Sophie about the atrocities that the *békés* commited against slaves who had been suspected of poisoning livestock. The way Esternome depicts these harrowing incidents to his daughter represents a certain kind of censorship we observed in Juan Francisco Manzano's autobiography.

Read side-by-side, the lines "corramos un velo sobre esta escena dolorosa" and "permets-moi de ne pas te décrire le cachot" convey the same idea: there is something more important than the narrative of pain and suffering in this story.

> Plus tard, pour terrifier les empoisonneurs, les békés inventèrent le cachot. J'en vois encore de-ci de-là dans les paysages qui gardent mémoire, et chaque fois je frissonne. Leurs pierres ont conservé grises des tristesses sans fond. [...] *Permets-moi de ne pas te décrire le cachot* car tu ne comprends, Marie-Sophie, disait mon papa, il ne faut pas illustrer ces choses-là, afin de laisser à ceux qui les ont construites la charge totale de leur existence. *Cette horreur n'a bien entendu servi à rien. Que peut-on contre la force des hommes de force*? [my emphasis] (*Texaco* 50-51)

In describing the horrific moment when the *mayoral* whips Manzano with a braided, leather whip, the narrator omits the explicit details: "al oír estallar el primer foetazo […] estuve a pique de perder la vida a manos del citado D. Silvestre – pasemos, pasemos en silencio el resto de esta escena dolorosa" (Manzano 93). The omission concerning the details of traumatic memories has been interpreted by many scholars as the narrator asserting his authorship over the narrative. According to Silvia Molloy, based on his correspondence with del Monte, it is clear that "Manzano's concept of 'the most interesting' has changed; that he is valuing *something else* in himself besides the story of his misfortunes" (Molloy 43). Manzano does not define himself as a wounded victim of the horrific brutality to which he was subjected under the custody of the Marchioness de Prado. Instead, the narrator's subjectivity and self-awareness is built on the narrative of an unfortunate slave who became a man of letters and jack of all-trades by means of the consumption and reproduction of the scraps left behind by his masters and mistresses. In short, illustrating how the objects and culture he had access to contributed to the development and discovery of his personal identity is more important than detailing how the violence and torture he experienced as a slave. The same can be applied to interpret Esternome's description of the plantation.

Esternome believes that the description of these atrocities serves no purpose: "que peut-on contre la force des hommes de force?" In other words, there is no amount of denunciation that could ever counter the power of the "hommes de force". It is important to make an aside on the topic of violence and its meaning in the context of the Caribbean plantations. The pain and suffering that slaves were subjected to goes beyond the overt displays of violence (such as the "cachot" in Esternome's narrative). It is well-established that the violence and terror of the Code Noir of 1685, a system of rules and regulations that governed the lives of slaves in the French West Indies until emancipation, "is one of the most spectacular instances of what Paul Gilroy calls 'the complicity of rationality and ethnocidal terror'" (Miller 28-29). From punishment to grueling working conditions to malnutrition, "death drove the slave trade and kept it going" (Miller 31). The quality of life and the life expectancy of Caribbean laborers was bleak. In addition to this, there were also mundane displays of violence: "the most invasive forms of slavery's violence lie not in these exhibitions of 'extreme' suffering or in what we see but in what we don't see […] in the benign scenes of plantation life […] reciprocity and recreation obscure the quotidian routine of violence" (Hartman 42).

However, Chamoiseau's novel does not bring this "quotidian routine of violence" to the foreground in Esternome's narrative. This does *not* negate the existence of this of violence, but the absence of its description does generate, inadvertently or deliberately, a more *positive* depiction of the plantation site. This positive portrayal of the plantation is reinforced by the depiction of the plantation as a "habitation": "la vie de *l'habitation* se régla sur son rythme. Ses présences suspendaient le travail et ne laissaient fumer que des chaudières de la surcote" [my emphasis] (*Texaco* 64). In this depiction, the plantation almost seems benign, calm, even reminiscent of the idealized scenes of agricultural labor in pastoral literature. All of this raises

the question: why does the narrator leave out descriptions of overt and mundane violence and portray the plantation in a positive way? It does not have to do with the listener, both Marie-Sophie listening to her father's narrative and Oiseau de Cham listening to Marie-Sophie's narrative, being unable to handle the depiction of the violence and terror of plantation life. And it definitely does not derive from any association with the paradisiacal and romanticized descriptions of the West Indies from the European literary traditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *Texaco* eschews the description of pain and suffering in order to bring attention to more effective, more powerful ways to respond to the oppressive forces of the dominant spatial configurations: *the recognition of identity formation by means of a meaningful attachment to, rootedness in space*. This brings us back to Esternome's description of the "Grande-case".

In the passage where Esternome describes the architecture of the "Grande-case", we should note that in addition to highlighting Esternome's curiosity and desire to create meaning from space, the narrator conveys the *formative* significance Esternome's experience in the "Grande-case" would have on future generations. His admiration of the structure of the house plays a fundamental role in shaping his *as well as* Marie-Sophie's ways of being-in-the-world: "cette vue de charpente détermina sans doute les tracées de sa vie, de son destin et finalement du mien" (*Texaco* 61). There is more to Esternome's experience than admiration of its architecture. It is so impactful that it influences his destiny *as well as* Marie-Sophie's. It generates an intergenerational impact. Esternome develops an acute *sense of self*, an *identity*, by means of the variety of tasks and duties he executes in the "Grande-case":

> Il fut chasseur de mouches, manieur d'éventail au moment des chaleurs, nettoyeur des persiennes et fermeur de volets. Il fut écraseur de ravets, piégeur de rats et vielleur des serpents qui visitaient les dépendances. Il fut porteur des paniers à linge de sa mère, eplucheur de cuisine, desherbeur de jardin, plumeur des trente volailles à l'aube des jours

> des fêtes, savonneur de vaisselle, arroseur de plantes vertes, secoueur de draps et batteur de matelas [...] Plus âgé, il fut coursier entre le rez-de-chaussée et la vie de l'étage, entre le jardin et la cuisine, entre les champs et la Grande-case, puis en direction d'habitations voisines (*Texaco* 59-60).

It is important to consider the way the narrator describes the various, seemingly unrelated, and haphazard chores that her father executed. It sounds as if she were proclaiming her father's distinguished accomplishments to the reader, describing his impressive list of accolades with a sense of pride. What is also important to note is that the title of this section in the novel is titled "la conquête de la Grande-case"... "the conquest of the Big Hutch". Maeve McCusker claims that the term "habitation" conveys the idea that the plantation is a "space which has to be wrested, both physically and ideologically, from the hands of the ruling classes" (McCusker "Constructing" 44). I hesitate to interpret Esternome's actions as an example of "wresting" the plantation from the hands of his masters. In recalling Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins term "livable forms of life", Esternome's actions are *not* anti-colonial, he is acting very much in accordance with the dominant spatial configuration of his context. He is fulfilling his duties as a house slave. His actions, however, *manipulate* the pliable conditions of the dominant structures to *create and extract meaning for himself*. By means of carrying out, fulfilling the multitude of menial chores, Esternome derives a sense of pride, a certain satisfaction even, from the way he occupies the master's space, from the way he interacts with the physical environment of the "Grande-case". The very method that is intended to subject Esternome to a condition of servitude and dehumanization – slave labor – ends up becoming the very instrument that Esteronme uses to develop his self-awareness as a resourceful, inventive, and creative builder and jack-of-all-trades. *He creates meaning for himself from his interaction with space*. In the words of Christine Chivallon, "il n'y a pas d'identité venue à forme sans travail sur et par l'espace pour en signifier les constituants" (*Espace* 30).

To conclude this section, I draw attention to the similarities between Esternome's and Manzano's narrative of self. In the same way Manzano develops the narrator's self-awareness as a "man of letters" by means of the narrator's consumption and mimesis of the scraps left behind by his masters, Esternome develops his trade as a handyman (and eventually passes down that skill to his daughter) by means of his thorough execution of all the tasks and odd jobs that his masters gave him to complete. Considering this, the reader can better understand the significance of his admiration of the "Grande-case", the formative effect that his occupation of the "Grande-case" has on his destiny and that of his daughter. This is the first instance in the narrative of Marie-Sophie where the reader can point to a concrete example of not only a longing for attachment to or rootedness in space, but also specific actions that are taken to create and extract meaning from space. The narrative recognizes and values the "lieu" in identity formation through these descriptions.

While the description of Esternome's interaction with the "Grande-case" is an important component in recognizing and valuing the "lieu", it shows a *partial* vision of the "habitation". This is, after all, a description of the experience of a *house* slave. The vast majority of laborers on a nineteenth-century plantation in the French West Indies were field slaves and would have experienced the "habitation" quite differently. For Esternome, the architecture of the "Grande-case" inspires his future career as a builder; he develops a self-awareness as a capacious builder (and by extension so does Marie-Sophie) through his occupation of the "Grande-case". There is another dynamic in this spatial configuration that is not conveyed through the aforementioned descriptions. The dynamic between the "Grande-case" and the plantations that surround it and, most importantly, where the majority of slaves would be located. There are two key points that are illustrated in the narrator's description below. First, the "Grande-case" emanates power, it is

the epicenter that dominates the "habitation" as a whole. Secondly, it *draws sustenance from*, it is *nourished by* the plantations and gardens that surround it:

> La Grande-case s'élevait au centre des dépendances, des bâtiments et des paillotes. A partir d'elle, rayonnaient les champs, les jardins, les emblavures de café, escaladant la pente des arbres au bois précieux. Elle dominait le tout, semblait tout aspirer [...] afin de nourrir ses beaux-airs de puissance. Les negres l'apercevant des partout du travail, en gardaient l'oeil furtif que nous aurions plus tard sur la face des En-villes ou de leur cathédrale (*Texaco* 61)

The position of the "Grande-case" in relation to the rest of the plantation gives it an imposing air, a commanding and even awe-inspiring countenance. The plantations and gardens "rayonnaient" from the epicenter, as if the plantation revolves around the "Grande-case". Reading ahead, this passage puts into relief a fundamental aspect about the dynamic between the "Grande-case" and the "champs", the two major *zones* that constitute the "habitation": the surrounding "champs" that are commanded by the "Grande-case" *simultaneously* sustain the spatial configuration of the "habitation" altogether. Around the "Grande-case", there is an entirely different zone with its own architecture and signifiers of meaning. Around the "Grande-case", there is a different zone in which its inhabitants have developed their own unique "livable forms of life". Up until this point, the narrative has been focused on the ways in which meaning is created and extracted in the "Grande-case". The passage above simultaneously introduces the "other" zone and also foreshadows the ongoing dynamic that will reappear in Marie-Sophie's experience in "l'En-ville" later in the narrative. This passage will be revisited further ahead in this chapter, but for the moment, it is important to notice how much the narrative emphasizes continuity and intergenerational effects. Esternome's experience in the "Grande-case" played a major role not only in his destiny but also in his daughter's destiny. Likewise, the narrative here is emphasizing how the dynamic that sustained the "habitation" during the "temps de paille" in Esternome's

experience would also sustain the spatial configuration during the "temps de fibrociment" in Marie-Sophie's personal experience.

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The surrounding "champs" that are commanded by the "Grande-case" simultaneously *sustain the spatial configuration of the "habitation" altogether*. What does this mean? How does the narrative illustrate this dynamic?

> [...] le destin lors d'un virage lui changea l'existence. Un retard advint dans les voiliers du bourg, causant une pénurie des boucauts de morue, de bœuf salé et de pois secs qui constituaient l'ordinaire du manger [...] [le béké] vit alors son garde-manger tomber au maigre. Les esclaves eux, familiers des ventres flasques, ramenèrent de jardins invisibles de quoi tenir sur le poids de leur corps. De plus, ils surent empoigner les zabitans à la rivière, enivrer les lapias avec un jus d'écorce, piéger la chair d'un gibier migrateur (*Texaco* 62).

This passage describes a moment in which the apparent authority and supremacy of the "Grande-case" is put into question. The very same "Grande-case" that "dominait le tout, semblait tout aspirer [...] afin de nourrir ses beaux-airs de puissance" finds itself in a circumstance of scarcity and instability due to a delay in the shipment of essential food rations. At the same time, in response to the same delay, the zone that surrounds the "Grande-case" springs into action. The laborers that occupy that zone know exactly what to do. As a result of the scarcity they are already accustomed to, "familiers des ventres flasques", they mobilize their knowledge and skills that had been developed through their experience in the "champs". They derived sustenance from their "invisible gardens", they knew the autochthonous species of animals and plants they could hunt and cook to keep themselves from starving… Like Esternome, they developed their own "livable forms of life" through their unique experience in the "champs" of the "habitation". They learned to interact with their environment in a way that treated space as "une espace nourricière" which *in turn* procured them a sense of *autonomy*: "la symbolique de la terre nourricière est

fortement mobilisée pour suggérer que le pivot de la plus élémentaire des libertés se trouve à travers la maîtrise des ressources les plus essentielles à la vie" (Chivallon "Éloge" 116). The ability to master essential resources for survival, to "make do" under circumstances that are inescapable but pliable, is an example of an elaboration of a fundamental liberty. I argue that this is a fictional representation of a historical phenomenon that took place during the early nineteenth century in the French West Indies: *an economy of self-subsistence*.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Chamoiseau constantly obscures the line between historical fact and fiction. In his interview with Maeve McCusker, he talks about the "va-et-vient constant entre la fiction et la réalité" that emerges through his writing. Chamoiseau explains that he does this deliberately to "[mettre] en doute le réel [...] [déplacer] le positionnement du réel pour le situer dans une perspective qui permet de considérer le réel autrement" (McCusker "Problématique" 729). What is the "réel" that is being questioned and reconsidered in this passage? According to Christine Chivallon, economic modernization in Martinique had begun *before* the abolition of slavery in 1840, contrary to the idea that modernization was the result of industrialization (around 1845 when the first factory was built in Martinique): "l'industrialisation se heurte inevitablement à l'absence d'un marché du travail" (Chivallon *Espace* 151). The modernization of the Martinican economy that took place in the nineteenth century was the result of a "mise en oeuvre" that field slaves had developed and sustained since the eighteenth century. Field slaves had been accustomed to foraging, hunting, and providing for themselves for a long time *before* the abolition of slavery and *before* industrialization. According to Handler and Wallman's archeological study of Crève-Cœur, a site in Martinique that operated as a plantation from the 1760s to the end of the nineteenth century, there is evidence that some Martinican planters, "in order to reduce their expenses" adhered to a system that "provided a labor-free day,

usually Saturday, compelling slaves to grow crops in both provision grounds and house-yard gardens, raise livestock and poultry, and harvest fish and shellfish during this time" (Handler et al 451). This is a factual example of the economy of self-subsistence that Chivallon describes in her anthropological study of the Martinican peasantry in the nineteenth century *and* an example of the "livable forms of life" Chamoiseau describes: "les esclaves eux [...] ramenèrent de jardins invisibles de quoi tenir sur le poids de leur corps [...] ils surent empoigner les *zabitans* à la rivière, enivrer les lapias avec un jus d'écorce, piéger la chair d'un gibier migrateur" [my emphasis] (*Texaco* 62). The word "zabitans" does not appear in any official dictionary, suggesting a deliberate play on words. The phonetic similarity between the phrase "*les habitants*" and "*zabitans*" strongly suggests that the "champs" is a place to be *inhabited*. This is precisely what the field slaves were doing. This zone in the plantation became their *place*. This is why there was a "tendance générale favorable au maintien de la main d'œuvre sur les plantations" (Chivallon *Espace* 153) even *after* the proliferation of factories and the reorientation toward a consumer-based economy in Martinique. There was a *resistance to* leaving the plantation behind because field slaves had already derived a sense of autonomy, a certain kind of *identitarian* independence, through their experiences in providing for themselves in the plantation sites. It is important to integrate this information in order to understand what *Texaco* the novel is doing through its description of the field slaves. The historical narrative of development of Martinique *obscures* the role that laborers played not only in the modernization of Martinican economy but also in the development of a Martinican identity. The novel recognizes and values this as a powerful "livable form of life". Their economy of self-subsistence is also an act of creating and extracting meaning from space for the consolidation of an identitarian outcome: *we are the owners of our own survival*. As the narrative will

demonstrate later on, the development of this identity influences the destiny of Esternome as well as that of Marie-Sophie. In the same way the "champs" played a role in sustaining the spatial configuration of the "habitation" as a whole, emancipated slaves and their descendants would also play a role in sustaining the spatial configuration of "l'En-ville" through the development of Texaco the shantytown.

The way the term "habitation" conveys meaning in Chamoiseau's novel is comparable but not the same to how I use the term to interpret the dominant tropes in Avellaneda's novel. One of the fundamental tropes in *Sab* is the celebration of the natural beauty of Cuba. I argue that the narrative of the novel celebrates this natural beauty as a way to shift the reader's gaze towards the interior of the island, emphasizing the integral role Cuban *criollos* play in the preservation of their island's natural resources. The identification of the island's indigenous plants by their local names (instead of their Linnaean classifications) along with the guardianship of these natural resources modeled by Sab the slave's way of being-in-the-world collectively portray the plantation site as an "amniotic space", a site that nurtures a congenital way of inhabiting space for its constituents.

Texaco's depiction of the "habitation" builds on this notion of an "amniotic space" while at the same time favoring a more nuanced exploration of the plantation site. It portrays the "habitation" more as an *ecosystem*, a relational dynamic between interdependent forces coming from different zones. The distinction between the "Grande-case" and the surrounding "champs" and the different ways in which meaning is created and extracted from each zone implies that the "lieu", an "amniotic space", an "anthropological space" emerges *only by virtue of* the intent and work its occupants carry out to create "livable forms of life". The development of their identity is developed *in tandem with* the actions they take to sustain, to make use of their "lieu".

The symbiosis between "lieu" and identity formation becomes evident when the opportunity to leave the "habitation" arrives. The notion of searching for another site, another "habitation", beyond the dominant spatial configuration in which Esternome's identity has begun to take shape emphasizes the *interdependence* that exists between *place* and *identity*. Secondly, this realization brings up a fact that had been concealed, or at least obscured, throughout the simultaneous development of identity and "lieu": the "habitation" is *not* the end destination. Identity formation can start there but the development and concretization of the identity must continue *beyond* the "habitation". In what follows, *Texaco*'s narrative describes how the movement away from, outside of the "habitation" not only shows how Esternome becomes more aware of this connection between identity and "lieu" but also the urgent need to run away so as to forge his identity as a builder.

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An accident that nearly takes the *maître*'s life sets in motion a series of events that drastically change the destiny of Esternome. Esternome, who rescues the master and takes him back to the "Grande-case", is compensated with something he had never heard of: "*affranchissement*". When the master regains consciousness, "au bout de son silence, le Béké dit à mon papa qu'il allait *l'affranchir*, mot qui sur l'instant ne lui signifia rien" (*Texaco* 66). Up until that moment, Esternome's focus and energy is being channeled into the development of his identity within the pliable but inescapable conditions of the "habitation". What Esternome realizes at the moment of his "affranchissement" is that he had not considered how the institution of slavery dictated what he could do even to a greater degree than the "habitation". Marie-Sophie explains that her father was so bewildered by his emancipation, so clueless about what "libre de savane" meant, that he

> mit du temps à comprendre qu'il n'avait plus de chaînes. Qu'il pouvait travailler ou passer la journée ventre en l'air au soleil [...] conserver sa case ou bien prendre son envol. A chaque découverte d'une liberté nouvelle, il supputait un piège posé par le Béké, puis en mesure-en mesure l'investissait à fond (*Texaco* 67).

He did not know how to exist without the paradigm of forced labor. He had never considered what life could be like freed from the constraint of forced labor, let alone how the development of identity and rootedness in space could *evolve* outside the bondage of slavery. Gradually, Esternome begins to explore the possibilities, starting from relinquishing his duties to the most important one – leaving the "habitation" altogether – which leads him to extricate himself from the trap that was emancipation. What he needs to do is run away, a fact that he discovers by means of wandering around the "habitation".

At first, Esternome wanders because he does not know what else to do: "car s'il avait dû évacuer la Grande-case, il était demeuré dedans l'habitation, menant une vie selon son coeur, chassant, pêchant, drivant au long des routes des traces et des sentiers" (*Texaco* 68). The immediate response to his emancipation is a reflex. Forced labor was the fundamental thing that had shaped his entire experience as a house slave. When presented with the chance to do something other than labor, the most viable alternative seems to be, at first, indulging in leisure. Esternome carries out the act that he thought was only possible for his masters: to do nothing. As part of his exploration of leisure, Esternome wanders, veers without a sense of direction or a specific destination in mind. Unable to decide whether to stay there permanently or to leave, he stalls and the "habitation" becomes a sort of harbor for him: "il n'osait ni partir ni vraiment demeurer. Bagage bizarre, l'habitation était pour lui devenue une sorte de havre" (*Texaco* 68). The narrator's word choice in describing the "habitation" as a "harbor" is important because it conveys a notion of impermanence. Esternome stays put in the plantation because he has no idea where to go or what to do. This "harboring" is not meant to and does not last long for Esternome,

for the very institution of terror and violence that had governed his life up until his emancipation was still very much alive in the plantation. He observes how "le Béké devenait de plus en plus méchant. Son cachot fonctionna en toute atrocité [...] Tout le temps de cet encachotement, l'habitation s'éveilla grise des duvets d'un oiseau battant une aile hagarde dans l'air mol de son ciel" (*Texaco* 68). The reign of terror and violence had only intensified, slavery did not lose power after his emancipation. He decides "de fuir cette bitation de merde, d'abandonner ces champs, de ne plus voir ces cannes" when he learns that his own father had been put into the *cachot* (*Texaco* 69). The narrative begs the question: what is holding Esternome back from leaving? Why does he continue to stall in the plantation like a ship in a harbor? Are the atrocities taking place in the plantation not appalling enough to make him flee the plantation?

Esternome is not ignorant or blind to the situation. On the contrary, he is aware, even though not fully, of the circumstances that make the thought of fleeing absurd. In the following passage, the reader realizes that Esternome understands the severity of the circumstances that control his life even after emancipation: "les békés avaient réduit cette terre au cirque d'une épouvante dont ils serraient les lois. De ce fait, l'idée de partir sifflait pour mon Esternome un vieux conte de misères" (*Texaco* 69). First and foremost, Esternome himself is not aware of the specific type of emancipation that he had received. At this point in the narrative, Marie-Sophie explains that "libre de savane" was "la plus facile des manières de libérer un nègre. On le déclarait libre sans acte notarié, sans taxe aucune, sans obligée d'une pension d'aliment" (*Texaco* 66). Esternome himself could not read and he did not know about the specific type of emancipation he had received. Nevertheless, Esternome was still captive to that spatial configuration. He dismisses the notion of leaving as a "vieux conte de misères" because to a certain degree he is aware that he is still being held captive. His emancipation bears the weight of

truth only as long as the masters who had previously owned him *recognized* his emancipation. This leads to the next point: Esternome is aware that there is no way to "escape" the tyranny of the *békés* because, first and foremost, before being the architects of the "Grande-case", before being the *maîtres* of slaves, they are the *landowners*. Whether he leaves or stays, the *békés* would continue to possess and control the space. They had transformed the space into a "cirque d'épouvante dont ils serraient les lois". What difference would it make if he leaves or stays? He suspects that he will find the same structure everywhere else. Up until this point, according to his world view, the only spaces he can inhabit are plantations. There is veracity to his suspicion insofar as the power of the landowning class did extend beyond the plantations. What has not been revealed to Esternome yet is the existence of another spatial configuration, "l'En-ville", where the creation and extraction of meaning for the realization of his identity can fully take place. Esternome's hesitates, stalls in that form of "habitation" because he does not know *how* to pursue an existence beyond the "habitation" he has always known.

Despondent by the sobering fact of the master's preponderant, omnipresent control, Esternome wanders. Through this wandering

> il se trouvait au fond de l'habitation, en un côté où la terre s'enroulait sur elle-même avant de s'élancer en morne sous un nœud de raziés. Et là, ainsi, comme ça, tout bonnement il vit du coco de z'yeux ce que tout averti aurait bien aimé voir: un Mentô (*Texaco* 69).

The figure of the "Mentô" is an enigmatic figure that remains hidden but intermittently comes to the foreground at specific points throughout the novel. The "Mentô" becomes synonymous with "charlatan" or "sorcerer", which is addressed by the narrator herself: "Excuse la précision, mais afin de comprendre, il faut savoir qu'avec les hommes de force (l'Histoire les appelle quimboiseurs, séanciers ou sorciers) surgissait parfois *la* Force" (*Texaco* 69-70). I build upon Lorna Milne's interpretation and argue that, in what concerns Esternome's narrative, the

encounter with the "Mentô", a figure who "préservait nos restes d'humanité", who retains the "expérience fondamentale commune" of the Middle Passage, is the catalyst that redirects Esternome's creation and extraction of meaning from space *beyond* the "habitation".[10] The "Mentô" embodies the experience of the "absolu-inconnu" and the subsequent labor executed by the first "débarqués". What was the labor of the first "débarqués"? The "Mentô" was a "débarqué parmi les tout premiers (*Texaco* 70). He "avait usé son jeune âge à défricher l'habitation" (*Texaco* 70). In short, the "Mentô" experienced and is one of the only few remaining who remembers *the process of creating space from scratch*.

Esternome, at first, "n'avait pas envie d'en parler avec un être aussi insignifiant" (*Texaco* 73). However, when he feels the hand of the "Mentô" grip his wrist with "la force d'un moulin neuf" Esternome is taken aback. After this encounter, the narrator says that "mon Esternome se montra crédule des diableries" (*Texaco* 73). He becomes convinced of the generative capacity of the "inconnu-absolu"[11] that his predecessors experienced in order to create meaning, specifically, to create meaning *elsewhere*.

> Le regard du vieux-nègre s'était empreint d'une autorité immémoriale capable [...] Ce dernier lui parla dans un créole différent de celui du Béké [...] Cette parole [...] insuffla

[10] According to Lorna Milne, "chez Chamoiseau, c'est l'esclave vieil homme qui incarne le plus clairement cette hantise, mi-refoulée mais essentielle, de la cale" (Milne 49) and in restoring "contact avec ses origines", the individual "commence à s'ériger un moi nouveau" (Milne 72)

[11] In the *Poétique de la Relation*, the experience of the Middle Passage is described as an "évanouissement" of every single word and object that carries the semblance of the familiar, of the "connu". Through the Middle Passage, one feels "s'évanouir non seulement l'usage des mots [...] mais l'image close de l'objet le plus quotidien, de l'animal le plus familier" (Glissant *Poétique* 19). Consequently, through this vanishing of every last fragment of the familiar "l'inconnu-absolu, qui était la projection du gouffre, et qui portait en éternité le gouffre-matrice et le gouffre en abîme, à la fin est devenu connaissance" (Glissant *Poétique* 20). The experience of losing touch with the elements that composed the frame of reference, the fundamental repertoire for the concept of the self for the people in the hold of the slave ship generates the experience of "l'inconnu-absolu". Following Glissant's line of thought, the inception of "l'inconnu-absolu" becomes the "connaissance partagée" of the people in the hold of the slave ship. Lorna Milne argues that the objective of "un écrivain engagé comme Chamoiseau est de faire appel chez ses compatriotes tant à un sentiment de différenciation identitaire face à l'assimilation française, qu'à un sens de la collectivité à travers l'idée d'une expérience fondamentale commune" (Milne 46). The reencounter of this "inconnu-absolu" described by Glissant brings the reader to the figure of the "Mentô" who embodies, building upon Milne's argument, "l'idée d'une expérience fondamentale commune".

> dans son cœur le cœur même de partir. Elle érigea aussi le Mentô à la source de notre difficulteuse conquête du pays. Prendre [...] de toute urgence ce que les békés n'avaient pas encore pris: les mornes, le sec du sud, les brumeuses hauteurs, les fonds et les ravines, puis investir ces lieux qu'ils avaient créés mais dont nul n'évaluait l'aptitude à dénouer leur Histoire en nos mille cent histoires [...] puis dans un français très appliqué me murmura deux fois une pour oreille, l'autre droit au coeur: *L'En-ville fout': Saint-Pierre et Fort-Royal…* (*Texaco* 73-74).

Setting foot on the Windward littoral, in chains, having witnessed the "évanouissement" of every familiar word and object in the abyss of the slave ship, with no sense of direction or frame of reference… The "Mentô" knows exactly what it is like to create a place from nothing. That is what Esternome feels through the gaze: the "Mentô" was part of the creation of the very space that would eventually become the "habitation" that Esternome would later inhabit and from which he would derive inspiration for his future career as an architect and builder. Through his speech, Esternome begins to understand more clearly the "Mentô's" message. Esternome already knows how to create meaning from space even under circumstances that are inescapable. The next step is to take his knowledge and skills *elsewhere,* to leave and grab a hold of a region that had not yet been usurped by the "békés" and create a place of his own: "cette parole [...] insuffla dans son coeur le coeur même de partir [...] Prendre [...] de toute urgence ce que les békés n'avaient pas encore pris: les mornes, le sec du sud, les brumeuses hauteurs, les fonds et les ravines, puis investir ces lieux qu'ils avaient créés " (*Texaco* 74). "Investir ces lieux", or in other words, "valoriser le lieu", creates and extracts meaning from "ces lieux" in order to realize his own identity. The earlier description of the field slaves' economy of self-subsistence bears a striking similarity to the "Mentô's" words. Their economy of self-subsistence is not only a means of survival but also an act of creating and extracting meaning from space for the consolidation of an identitarian outcome. The way they manifest this is by claiming the space in the furthest perimeter of the "habitation", extracting resources from that space for their own

survival, which in turn signifies their identity. It is an example, even if it is a premature one, of what the "Mentô" describes as the act of "prendre [...] de toute urgence ce que les békés n'avaient pas encore pris". By the grace of a cyclone and a serendipitous encounter with a man by the name of Theodorus Sweetmeats, Esternome begins his quest to find that not-yet taken place.

Part IV: From "l'Habitation" to "l'En-ville"

Up until now, the narration has described a specific model in which identity, personal and collective, is consolidated by extracting meaning from a specific spatial configuration: "l'Habitation". Through Esternome's observations, the "Habitation" as a whole is an ecosystem where each zone, the "Grand-case" and the "champs", simultaneously is sustained by *and* sustains the other. In what concerns identity formation, even within the bondage of slavery, Esternome becomes aware of his personal identity as an architect and builder in his admiration, occupation, and exploration of the "Grand-case". He also develops an acute sense of self and self-confidence as a jack-of-all-trades through his fulfillment of his role as a house slave. Furthermore, Esternome becomes aware of his collective identity with the other slaves in the plantation as owners of their own survival when he witnesses how their development of subsistence farming in the furthest perimeter of the "champs" ultimately saves them from starvation. The *use* of space is key in the formation of identity. Esternome's understanding of identity deepens when he becomes a *libre de savane*. Through his emancipation, he realizes that even though he is no longer a "slave", he is *not* free from the condition of servitude, dispossession, and ultimately, displacement. These conditions are constraining but also *flexible*. Through his interaction with the "Mentô", Esternome learns that he must *take* the sites that the

béké landowners had not yet taken and "investir ces lieux" with meaning in order to defend and further develop his identity within the inescapable conditions of the pre-emancipation period. "L'En-ville" is the first stop on his quest to find the not-yet-taken place. In what follows, I examine what is "l'En-ville" and why it is not the not-yet-taken place the "Mentô" describes. I analyze how Esternome interprets the "Mentô's" admonition – how Esternome he goes about his quest for identity, meaning, and finding the "lieu".

Before he even arrives at "l'En-ville" or even has formed an idea of what "l'En-ville" is, Esternome experiences an epiphany in his journey away from "l'Habitation".

> Mon Esternome qui n'avait jamais dépassé les zones de son habitation, découvrit le pays: une terre jamais plate, dressée en verdure vierge, enchantée d'oiseaux-chants et des siffles de bêtes-longues. [...] Excepté dans les habitations orgueilleuses, solitaires, alimentées de leur propre nombril, le pays était désert (*Texaco* 79).

The first important detail to highlight is the word "pays". This is one of the first times in the narrative of Esternome where space is described as a "pays". Not as a systematic network of zones, each executing a specific function for the benefit of and by virtue of humans. Not as a manifestation of the existence of landowners and laborers. Rather, as an entity: "le pays". However this word may be translated ("country", "province", "region"), the descriptor "pays" matters because it gives space another dimension, a deeper meaning: it has an identity *separate from* being used for the service of *békés*. What this identity is and what it means for him is not yet clear, but he is at least aware that an independent entity exists *beyond* the zones of "*son* habitation". This identification of the space outside the plantation is reinforced through the use of the possessive adjective "son". In recognizing that the "Habitation" is *his* (insofar as he used it and participated in its maintenance), Esternome by extension, confirms that the "pays" is the place of someone or something else. This leads to the next point: the description of the "pays" connotes a notion of occupancy. In spite of the absence of human intervention, this space is

occupied by all kinds of vegetation and the sounds of avian and terrestrial animals. Simply put, the description of the "pays" simultaneously personifies the space and affirms that it is *not* vacant. Various forms of life occupy that space; the "pays" has life of *its* own. What this conveys to Esternome, according to the narrative, is the realization that the world does not revolve around the plantation. No matter how powerful or all-encompassing the plantation may appear, there are other spaces outside the plantation occupied by various life forms and ecosystems. Esternome's epiphany suggests that the narrative is endorsing a certain kind of custody or possession of the land. The description "dressée en verdure vierge" can be translated in a number of ways. The verb "dresser" refers to the act of training, taming, or habituating something or someone for a specific outcome. Thus, I translate "dressée en verdure vierge" as "domesticated by virginal vegetation" because it simultaneously connotes a non-exploitative possession of the land by nature *and* as a sense of permanency. "Le pays" is a place of dwelling. If vegetation, birds and other animals can make the land a place of dwelling, Esternome can *certainly* also do the same. This epiphany for Esternome is significant because what he observes when he first encounters "l'En-ville" is an *echo,* an *intensification* of what he observes in the "pays".[12]

Esternome's arrival to the city of Saint-Pierre astonishes him. He wanders around the city with childlike admiration.

> Esternome mon papa ouvrait les cocos de ses yeux comme s'il avait débarqué dans un autre pays. D'abord: l'ombre aveugle de maisons basses de plus en plus fréquentes, de plus en plus hautes, puis un pont dessus un sillonage d'eau fraiche, puis tout soudain l'étincelle de la mer malgré le ciel obscur, vite tranchée par l'élève d'une façade plus haute qu'une Grande-case (*Texaco* 82).

[12] This description of the "pays" is important because it resonates with the detailed, vivid description of all the flora and birds of Cuba depicted at the beginning of Avellaneda's *Sab*. The purpose of this depiction of nature in *Texaco*, very similar to the function this kind of depiction has in Sab, is to personify the Caribbean space and emphasize its inherent potential to serve as an amniotic space for its dwellers.

In this first characterization of "l'En-ville", Esternome is initially amazed by the sheer density of houses. Seeing so many houses, growing in number and size, one after another gives the illusion that they are one single amorphous shadow: "l'ombre aveugle de maisons". An important aspect of this description is that the constructed objects of the urban space *eclipse* the existence of nature. A single stream of fresh water is canopied by a bridge. The number, size, and density of houses are so imposing and omnipresent that the sea is only able to peek through like a brief spark before it is sliced by the façade of a gigantic house. These minor details gain importance in comparison to Esternome's description of the "Grand-case". The description of the master's house through Esternome's eyes highlights the way the edifice mastered the natural elements such as wind and light: "seul le métier de découvreur des majestés de la maison lui suscita quelque intérêt […] Il se demandait quelle qualité de force avait pu élever cela, associer ces essences, domestiquer ces vents, ces ombres moelleuses et ces lumières" (*Texaco* 60). In Saint-Pierre, the natural elements are not only more domesticated; they almost seem to disappear, *eclipsed by* the enormous amalgamation of houses, roads, and bridges. In a similar way that the "Grand-case" sparked his interest in architecture, "l'En-ville" sparks his interest in the creation of *urban* spaces. This fascination leads Esternome to let himself *be taken in* by the "l'En-ville" before he even considers taking this not-yet-taken place.

This leads to the term itself: "En-ville". Translated simply as "city" by Réjouis et al., it is worthwhile to consider what the preposition "*en*" suggests about the specificity of this space in the novel. In comparison to the "Habitation", the "Grand-case", and the "champs", this space is the only one whose name connotes a sense of direction, a dynamic relation between itself and a subject. It necessitates the *participation* of someone or something else. In French, the expression that is used to say "I'm in town" or "I'm going to town" is "*en ville*": "*je suis en ville*", "*je vais*

en ville". In comparison to phrases with the preposition "*à*", such as "*je vais à Nantes*" or "*je suis à la gare*", which focus on the specific location, phrases with the preposition "*en*" place more emphasis on the *stay*, or the "*séjour*", than the specific location. Which specific city the sojourner is in does not matter as much as the sojourner's *being in* the city. The experience of being "in town", what one does, sees, touches, smells, and tastes while being "in town" is put into relief through the expression "en ville". Considering this, the reader can gain a better understanding of the specificity of "l'En-ville" in *Texaco*. "L'En-ville" is a site that is synonymous with interactive verbs: entering, peering, exploring, searching, finding… "L'En-ville" is meant to denote an allure, an enchantment, a certain mystery to the reader. This becomes particularly clear in the moments leading up to Esternome's discovery of Saint-Pierre. Before his arrival to Saint-Pierre, Esternome waits with excited anticipation to make his first entrance in Saint-Pierre: "mon Esternome travaillait et marchait sans fatigue, à dire un papillon voletant vers une lumière. L'idée de descendre à l'En-ville l'emportait tout bonnement" (*Texaco* 81). The metaphorical description of Esternome as a moth fluttering towards a shining light foreshadows something important about the experience he is about to have. He will experience wonder and amazement. At the same time, he cannot escape the danger and possible peril that is concealed in this space.

In spite of the potential peril that "l'En-ville" holds for someone like Esternome, the development of his self-awareness as a subject and realization of his role in the creation of spaces that lead to Texaco the shantytown all hinge on Esternome's encounter with "l'En-ville". Metaphorically, Esternome undergoes a metamorphosis when he is taken in by Saint-Pierre that begins, like the caterpillar to chrysalis phase, with a necessary period of hyperconsumption.

> Mon Esternome en prit une sorte de langueur, terrible comme un gros-poil, qu'il dissipait dans le cocomerlo des cabarets détenus par les Libres. Ce fut une vieille période,

> chignait-il d'habitude, mais de loin en loin des mots lui échappent, je sus qu'il y sombra en fait dans la volupté trouble des vagabonnageries. La plupart des mulâtres et des nègres affranchis s'étaient garés en ville. Ils fuyaient les champs d'habitation, hostiles à toute semence qui ne soit pas béké (*Texaco* 89).

There are a few important features to recall about Esternome's character. Upon his arrival to Saint-Pierre, his first reaction is admiration of the *structures* of "l'En-ville" and how they appear to eclipse the natural world around them. By this point in the novel, he has already become acutely aware of his personal identity: he is a jack-of-all-trades, a builder, an architect. His self-awareness and self-confidence comes from his knowledge and skill in the art and science of designing and building structures. This is corroborated during his journey with the handyman Theodorus Coco-doux when he leaves "l'Habitation" after his emancipation:

> Mon Esternome, malin quand il le faut [...] se préoccupa du secret des résistances aux tremblements de terre et aux démences du vent [...] Avec ce bougre-là [Theodorus Coco-doux], mon Esternome découvrit ce qui deviendrait son métier: art de nouer les poutrelles sans y mettre un seul clou, art d'équilibre des masses et de balance des poids, art de calcul des justes inclinaisons, art des essences et des tuiles fixées par de chalazes de cuivre (*Texaco* 77-78).

The inception of "son métier" took place while he was still a house slave and gets cultivated through his work under the tutelage of Theodorus Sweetmeats. In this initial period, this skill is the source of his self-awareness and self-confidence. Something changes in his character when he enters, or more appropriately, *gets taken in by* "l'En-ville". He participates in all the decadence and self-indulgence that Saint-Pierre has to offer an emancipated man like himself. In doing so, he becomes lethargic, led astray by the allure of the cabarets and any other form of entertainment. He sinks into, lets himself get pulled into in the overabundance of frivolity and decadence that saturates "l'En-ville". This description of Esternome makes a specific allusion to an earlier part in the narrative through the line "la plupart des mulâtres et des nègres affranchis s'étaient *garés* en ville" [my emphasis]. "*Garer*" is a unique word choice that connotes a certain

kind of *idle* stalling, an objective-*less*, temporary stay. Where else in the narrative is a word similar to "*garer*" used? During the short period following Esternome's emancipation: "il n'osait ni partir ni vraiment demeurer. Bagage bizarre, l'habitation était pour lui devenue une sorte de *havre*" [my emphasis] (*Texaco* 68). The plantation had become a sort of *harbor* for him. Similarly, for the majority of emancipated slaves, including Esternome, "l'En-ville" *also* became a sort of "*havre*". The idle stalling looks somewhat different in "l'En-ville": while in the plantation, to be "*garé*" was experienced as boredom, in the city, being "*garé*" is experienced as endless debauchery and indulgence in the overabundance of pleasure and hedonism. Still, the act of *being idle* is essentially the same in both contexts. While in the "Habitation", he "[menait] une vie selon son coeur, chassant, pêchant, drivant au long des routes des traces et des sentiers" (*Texaco* 68), in "l'En-ville", he "sombra en fait dans la volupté trouble des vagabonnageries" (*Texaco* 89).

The narrator's word choice in the latter description, "sombrer", "volupté", "trouble", "vabagonneries", denotes a certain disapproval of Esternome's descent. Why would the narrator express herself in this way? Throughout the novel, the voice of the narrator does not suggest any kind of draconian, puritanical ideology. It is unlikely that the narrator describes Esternome's descent into this state of idleness in a negative way because the narrator is morally opposed to the act of self-indulgence. Rather, the disapproval that is conveyed through this passage is a critique of a macro-level phenomenon. This individual scene of debauchery and self-indulgence is tied to the idea of *assimilation*. Esternome wanders into "l'En-ville" with the right motive: to search for and take a not-yet-taken place. He is acutely aware of and confident in his skills and expertise in designing and building. He identifies himself as an architect and a jack of all trades in "l'Habitation". However, upon his emancipation, he realizes that he cannot stay there forever.

Through his encounter with the "Mentô", he learns that he must leave that space, take the places that the békés had not yet taken and "investir ces lieux" with meaning. Where these "lieux" are and how they can be taken is not yet certain to Esternome, but he takes the "Mentô's" advice and leaves when the opportunity presents itself through the fortuitous advent of the cyclone. This quest is postponed and smothered when Esternome is taken in by "l'En-ville". The narrator's description of this initial period of her father's occupation of Saint-Pierre is an expression of the revulsion toward the insidiousness of assimilation.[13] All the skill and talent of her father Esternome was being squandered and smothered, his identity as an architect was being obscured in the island of the lotus eaters… Except, unlike Circe's island, "l'En-ville" is unique in the way it offers something else other than overabundant pleasure and amusement. Esternome at this

[13] This depiction of Esternome's initial decadence opens onto the topic of assimilation and consumerism that permeates every level of society in colonial societies. Every single person, from the békés, to the "mulâtres", to the "négraille affranchie" that gets taken in by "l'En-ville" is driven by the craving, the longing to "se blanchir": "tout un chacun rêvait de se blanchir: les békés en se cherchant une chair-France à sang bleu pouvant dissoudre leur passé de filibustre roturière, les mulâtres en guignant plus mulâtre qu'eux ou même quelque béké déchu" [my emphasis] (*Texaco* 93-94). For an affranchi like Esternome, assimilation is best understood through the concept of consumerism. The extent to which a slave on a plantation could acquire material was very limited. What Esternome consumed in the plantation and why he consumed anything needs to be understood as related to practices that fulfilled the need for survival, for existence, for the reclaiming of the self in a context that relegated him and all the other slaves to the status of livestock. The reasons why Esternome consumes and what he consumes in "l'En-ville" are entirely different. His consumer practices must be interpreted as the intended *function* of assimilation. While the individuals in positions of power, such as the *békés* and the mulattos, pine after opportunities to "se blanchir", scheming ways to get ahead of each other in society, that same assimilation also necessitates that someone remain at the lowest stratum of society, that a helpless, miserable lot of people founders in decadence and stagnation. In the narrator's words, these people are made into zombies: "enfin la négraille affranchie, comme mon cher Esternome [...] se vivait comme autant de zombis à civiliser sous d'éclatantes hardes et à humaniser d'une éclaircie de peau de toute la descendance [...] quand il s'y perdait il murmurait confus: aveuglage, embrouillage, petite Sophie, mon dernier punch, rien n'était clair en ce temps-la (*Texaco* 94-95). Assimilation offers opportunities to békés and mulattos to gain more power, to get ahead of each other in society for a personal gain, whether that be status or wealth. Meanwhile, they need a group of people to serve as a charity case. They need someone to "civilize", to "humanize". Uncertain about their status in society, eager to flee "les champs d'habitation, hostiles à toute semence qui ne soit pas béké" (*Texaco* 89) and eager to explore and be immersed in this new, dazzling space, the "négraille affranchie" becomes the perfect group of people to "civilize" and "humanize". Before they are "civilized" and "humanized", they first need to be placed in a pitiful state in order to earn the heroic rescue from a "superior" being. In the narrator's words, they need to be made into zombies. The sinister way this is achieved is through offering an abundance of distractions and amusement. The endless opportunities to experience pleasure render the affranchis idle, stagnant, lost. In the narrator's words, Esternome, along with the rest of the emancipated population, enter a state of blindness and confusion.

point in the narrative has not yet tapped into the creative potential of the city. Still, even in his state of "embrouillage" and "aveuglage," he observes how the city affects and ultimately changes those who enter it. The disorienting experience is not strong enough to prevent him from noticing the transformative power "l'En-ville". The following description of Saint-Pierre puts into relief two important qualities: cultural heterogeneity and non-discriminatory opportunity.

I read the cultural heterogeneity of Saint-Pierre in relation to the overall narrative up to this point.

> On y trouvait rencontre des marins hollandais, portugais, espagnols ou anglais, des voyageurs en goguette, des abbés savants en mission de chronique, des militaires, des blancs de France, des produits neufs, des vins [...] Saint-Pierre, c'était bel horizon pour qui savait y faire aussi pour qui n'avait aucun talent. Elle s'offrait à qui tentait de se rêver la vie plutôt que de la vivre, de se la battre en douce plutôt que de la suer (*Texaco* 89-90).[14]

What is unique about *this* depiction of mid-nineteenth century Saint-Pierre where Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, and English sailors, European and North American tourists, Jesuit and other Christian missionaries, French soldiers and nobility dance, gamble, proselytize, haggle, eat and sleep? Why is it important for Esternome? To interpret this passage, let us recall an earlier passage. Some time after Esternome's emancipation, observing how life on the plantation continued without the smallest disruption in the display of violence and terror, he comes to this conclusion: he absolutely had to "fuir cette bitation de merde, d'abandonner ces champs, de ne

[14] This kind of description of urban spaces is prevalent in contemporary Francophone postcolonial literature. For example, in Assia Djebar's novel *La disparition de la langue française*, the narrator Berkane depicts the urban space of the Kasbah in Algeria while it was still part of the French Republic: "dans les ruelles de la périphérie s'entendait le domaine des Gitans, ou des Italiens émigrés récents ; à l'opposé, du côté du temple protestant, non loin de la synagogue, une foule prolétaire était tout aussi inactive" (Djebar 70-71). The fact that urban spaces were (and still are) sites where people from all parts of the world, from various linguistic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds interact is not a unique characteristic of the French West Indies of the nineteenth century. As described in Djebar's novel, during French occupation Algiers was a site of a rich intercultural hybridization, a characteristic that is celebrated throughout novel, where the Imazighen, travelers of the Roma community, Italian immigrants, French pieds-noirs, Jewish peoples, Protestants, Muslims, and Catholics all interact and influence each other's linguistic and cultural practices.

plus voir ces cannes [...] les békés avaient réduit cette terre au cirque d'une épouvante dont ils serraient les lois" (*Texaco* 69). The "habitation" had become a "bitation de merde" when Esternome observed how the ongoing display of violence and terror only intensified after his emancipation. The "habitation" had become a "bitation de merde" when he observes how the *békés* had, seemingly, gained complete control of the land. The fact that he was a *libre de savane* did not in any way disturb or weaken the power of *békés*. To Esternome at that moment, they appeared *omnipotent*. This perception is the major incentive that drives Esternome to flee the plantation. In light of this, one can better understand how the cultural heterogeneity of Saint-Pierre is more than a unique socio-linguistic phenomenon to observe. For Esternome, "l'En-ville" is the experience of having his world expand far beyond his preconceived notion of space. More specifically, the cultural heterogeneity of "l'En-ville" shows Esternome that space is created by so many more people and spaces than he could have ever imagined. Up until his arrival to "l'En-ville," his world was limited exclusively to the plantation. As far as he or any other slave knew, the *békés* were omnipotent and there was no way to escape the never-ending terror and violence of the plantation. All that existed in his preconceived notion was the "Grand-case," the "champs," the mysterious "alentours" where the maroons dwelled. He had a vague idea of the continent where he and the other slaves came from and he was aware the *békés* came from somewhere. He knew nothing specific about anything or anyone else aside from the *békés*, the slaves, and the cattle, swine, and other animals that occupied the "Habitation." Here, in "l'En-ville," he comes into contact with the "autrui" and the "ailleurs." In conclusion, Esternome learns that the world is not limited to his immediate surroundings. This space, all the world he has known so far, is not isolated. Saint-Pierre, the plantation, and any other space in that land is part of a larger context, a network of trade routes stretching far beyond the horizon of the

Caribbean sea, that moves travelers, merchants, sailors, pirates, soldiers, missionaries, and nomads to and from the "ailleurs." The significance of the "ailleurs" is essentially revealed to Esternome through his encounter with the "autrui."

This leads to the other important aspect that makes "l'En-ville" unique: non-discriminatory opportunity: "Saint-Pierre, c'était bel horizon pour qui savait y faire aussi pour qui n'avait aucun talent. Elle s'offrait à qui tentait de se rêver la vie plutôt que de la vivre, de se la battre en douce plutôt que de la suer" (*Texaco* 89-90). The language of this passage, "savait y faire", "talent", "rêver la vie", prompts the reader to recall an earlier passage when Esternome becomes the apprentice of the garrulous and witty Theodorus Sweetmeats:

> Theodorus Koco-doux ajoutait son savoir de Normand aux enseignements offerts par les cases africaines et cabarets caraïbes. À mesure-en mesure, sa science des constructions devint particulière, accordée aux manières du vent et de la terre en ce pays de nouveautés [...] Quand il reprit la route, mon Esternome souhaita le suivre. Le bougre sans façons vu qu'il ne payait ses aides qu'au principe du symbole car le vrai salaire c'est cette science que je vous offre (*Texaco* 77-78).

There are two important aspects to note from this passage. First, the unique style of designing and building houses that Theodorus Sweetmeats learned was a method he acquired by virtue of his travels from *elsewhere*. By extension, Esternome's style of designing and building is also shaped by the styles and techniques from that very same *elsewhere*. The structural uniqueness of the "Grand-case" that inspired intrigue and cultivated Esternome's desire to become an architect and builder was an *incorporation* of techniques from the north of France with Amerindian and sub-Saharan African architectural styles. Primarily, this passage serves to reinforce the importance of the cultural heterogeneity that Esternome encounters in Saint-Pierre. There is a vast world beyond Saint-Pierre and these spaces are not isolated from each other; a dynamic that will only be fully understood and profited by his daughter Marie-Sophie (this will be discussed in the conclusion of this chapter). Secondly, and most importantly, Theodorus Sweetmeats is an

example of someone who has been transformed by “l’En-ville” and, by extension, extends that transformative power to Esternome. Esternome is so eager to learn more about architecture from this man, so eager to leave the plantation, that he does not yet realize that the thing he is drawn to is the opportunity to “rêver la vie” that is manifested in Theodorus. There is no promise that Esternome will receive any pecuniary compensation. At the same time, there is nothing Theodorus will gain from teaching Esternome. The aphorism “if you give a man a fish…” is an accurate description of this transaction. Esternome’s compensation is learning to make a living for himself and the handyman’s compensation is the pleasure of teaching him. In the text’s words: “le vrai salaire c’est cette science que je vous offre”. The compensation he earns is “talent”, the art of “[savoir] y faire”. Likewise, “L’En-ville” offers anyone who is without skill or talent the non-discriminatory opportunity to learn how to “se débrouiller” (a verb that can be translated as “to make do”, “to figure things out by oneself”, “to improvise”). What is non-discriminatory about this opportunity? Esternome does not do or say anything special or unique to earn the handyman’s tutelage. He just *wants to* learn, so Theodorus offers his knowledge and skills to him. Comparably, “l’En-ville” was a new beginning for “qui savait y faire *aussi* pour qui n’avait aucun talent” [my emphasis]. *Irrespective of* the level of knowledge and skill the traveler has, Saint-Pierre “s’offrait à qui tentait de se rêver la vie plutôt que de la vivre, de se la battre en douce plutôt que de la suer”. All the traveler needs to do is *want to* learn, *want to* imagine creating a different life for themselves. If the language of the passage “se la battre en douce plutôt que de la suer” connotes ideas of *ease* and *peace*, it is deliberate. I interpret the description of “calmly working with life instead of sweating it” as the practice of making a life for oneself within conditions that lend themselves to manipulation: making a “livable form of life”. For Esternome, someone who already has the know-how and skillset of an architect, handyman, jack-

of-all-trades, “l’En-ville” is meant to prompt him to resume where he left off. He was on the right track when he went on the journey with Theodorus Sweetmeats. The insidious functions of assimilation had temporarily blinded him. However, the encounter with this space forces him to rekindle the intellectual exercise that he had begun long before when he was still a slave in the plantation. His intellectual exercise is the act of observing and exploring the dynamics, functions, and zones of this new space. This is precisely what he does.

Following this description of Saint-Pierre as a “bel horizon” for the skilled and the unskilled, through his observation and exploration of “l’En-ville”, Esternome makes an important discovery about the city of Saint-Pierre: the labor and fruit of all the “bitations”, “Grand-cases”, “champs” sustain and become concentrated in “l’En-ville”

> Il comprit qu’*aboutissement* là les misères des grandes bitations. Tout ce sang solitaire, cette douleur sans bondieu, ce travail-boeuf contre les avalasses de la mauvaise saison [...] *se concentraient* ici, en boucauts, en barils, en colis, prenaient chemin des mers dans la cale des navires après l’onction magique des gros livres de comptes. Il comprit aussi [...] qu’en y passant seulement, la *richesse-plantations* avait créé cette ville, *nourri* avec les miettes de son passage des milliers de personnes qui des esclaves de terre ne savaient que peu de choses et s’en foutaient d’autant [my emphasis] (*Texaco* 100).

Once again, the narrator uses specific language in describing Esternome’s epiphany to make an allusion to an earlier passage. The way Saint-Pierre is described through words such as “aboutir,” “se concentrer,” “richesse-plantations,” and “nourri” echoes Esternome’s description of “l’Habitation” while he was still a slave.

> La Grande-case s'élevait au centre des dépendances, des bâtiments et des paillotes. A partir d’elle, *rayonnaient* les champs, les jardins, les emblavures de café, escaladant la pente des arbres au bois précieux. Elle *dominait* le tout, semblait tout *aspirer* [...] afin de *nourrir* ses *beaux-airs de puissance*. Les nègres l’apercevant des partout du travail, en gardaient l’oeil furtif que nous aurions plus tard sur la face des En-villes ou de leur cathédrale [my emphasis] (*Texaco* 61).

There are two major ideas the narrator conveys through this description of “l’En-ville” in relation to the earlier description of the plantation. First, every single plantation, including the

one Esternome left behind, is and always has been servient to “l’En-ville”. The narrator demonstrates this through the use of the noun “bitation”. Without the prefix “*ha*-” in “*habitation*”, the word “*bitation*” is disassociated from its verbal form “habiter” and is reduced to its substantive form “bâtiment”. The emphasis of the word “habitation” shifts away from the act of *inhabiting*, the act of *living* somewhere and focuses on the *site* itself, the *building*, through the removal of the prefix “*ha*”. The narrator’s use of the term “bitation” in this passage makes the “habitation” lose its connotations to a habitat, to an ecosystem, that *were* conveyed in Esternome’s description of “l’Habitation.” Here, in Saint-Pierre, the plantations are relegated to buildings in which sadistic displays of violence, perpetual experience of suffering and pain, endless labor and toil in spite of all weather conditions are concentrated, extracted, and eventually *culminate* in “l’En-ville.” The “Grand-case” is described as a vortex that “dominait tout, semblait tout aspirer [...] afin de nourrir ses beaux-airs de puissance”. In a very similar fashion, “l’En-ville” also “[semble] tout aspirer”... Saint-Pierre is personified as a merchant that apprises "après l’onction magique des gros livres de comptes”, packages “en boucauts, en barils, en colis”, and ships everything that the “bitations" produce. In “l’En-ville”, every dawn-to-dusk of grueling labor, every horrific use of the *cachot*, every display of mundane and overt violence is extracted, collected, inspected, and neatly packaged into barrels and crates that “prenaient chemin des mers dans la cale des navires.” It is also important to note that the narrator’s voice expresses a certain frustration through this description. The effortless way Saint-Pierre makes profit from the plantations *obscures* the grueling labor that slaves had to endure in order to build a space like Saint-Pierre.

This leads to the second part of Esternome’s epiphany: the extraction, collection, inspection, and shipment of the “richesse-plantations” collectively created *and* sustains the

“beaux-airs de puissance” of “l’En-ville.” Without the plantations, spaces like “Saint-Pierre” would not exist. Furthermore, the *passage* of everything and everyone through this space sustains and nourishes “l’En-ville.” With the arrival of every soldier, every Jesuit priest, every Portuguese, Dutch, English, and Spanish sailor, every tourist and *sang-bleu*, “l’En-ville” receives a “miette” from its traveler that cumulatively finances its endeavors and augments its size and wealth. Esternome also realizes that most of the slaves that pass through this same space are oblivious and do not care about these people. They have no idea how the city grows in wealth and size. Ultimately they have no clue how they themselves are the ones that made this space emerge through their labor. While in the plantation, they would look up at the “Grand-case” with an “oeil furtif”. In a similar way, these very same slaves are only able to perceive the “beaux-airs de puissance” of “l’En-ville”. The slaves that come to “l’En-ville” to sell their product in hopes of acquiring enough money to buy their freedom, “nèg-de-terre” as described by the narrator, are unfortunately unable to experience “l’En-ville” in the way Esternome does. Its generative potential and the way their labor created the city and contributed to its wealth is obscured from them. From their perspective, all they see is a “Grand-case”. This is how the narrator describes “les nèg-de-terre” observing “l’En-ville”:

> Ville haute. Ville massive. Ville porteuse d’une mémoire dont ils étaient exclus. Pour eux, l'En-ville demeurait impénétrable. Lisse. Ciré. Que lire dans ces fers forgés? Ces volets de bois peint? [...] Bonbon lui dit un jour [...] que l’En-ville c'était une Grand-case. La Grand-case des Grand-cases (*Texaco* 107).

To the “nèg-de-terre”, “l’En-ville” remains as inaccessible, unreachable, and ultimately, exclusionary. The imposing buildings with their welded iron and closed shutters collectively amalgamate into a gigantic “Grand-case” in the eyes of the slaves who come to “l’En-ville” with the dream of selling enough produce to purchase their freedom. It remains a site of mystery and remoteness… This observation is part of a series of epiphanies that makes Esternome come out

of his state of "aveuglage". First, Esternome is prompted to explore "l'En-ville" by "l'En-ville" itself. He discovers the "ailleurs" and the "autrui", he learns about its origin and how its ever-expanding wealth and size is maintained. Finally, he observes how the "nèg-de-terre" are unable to see what he sees in "l'En-ville". Collectively, these observations and realizations drive him out of his state of "aveuglage". As the narrative will show shortly, Esternome immerses himself in a movement "l'En-ville" is engaging with: universal emancipation.

At this point in the narrative, there are two distinct and seemingly contradicting conceptualizations of space(s) and its relation to Esternome's journey towards identity formation. First, there is an emphasis and value given to the practice of creating livable forms of life, or *autosubsistence* in Chivallon's words, under the inescapable but pliable conditions of a dominant spatial configuration. This is conveyed through the description of the field slaves in the plantation as self-sufficient subjects, as owners of their own survival. While the house of the master experienced a crisis of food shortage when the shipment of essential provisions was delayed, the field slaves sprang into action by making use of their creole gardens, of their knowledge of native fauna and flora to save themselves from starvation. This emphasis on creating livable forms of life is an allusion to the words of counsel Esternome received from the "Mentô": to take the lands that have not yet been taken by *békés* and "investir ces lieux" with meaning. In other words, he urges him to create a livable form of life *elsewhere,* to build an identity that is *rooted in his own place*. The admonition of the "Mentô" echoes the "*économie d'autosubistence*" of the field slaves: they claim ownership of their own survival by occupying and appropriating the periphery of the plantation that the *békés* have not claimed. "*If you don't claim space, space will claim you*" is one of the main themes conveyed through the narrative's emphasis on creating livable forms of life.

The narrative of Esternome's experience in Saint-Pierre presents a distinct conceptualization of space and its relation to identity formation. Esternome's encounter with "L'En-ville" projects him into a journey of discovery that fundamentally changes and expands his world view. His preconceived notion of space through his experience of living in the plantation is expanded to encompass the "ailleurs" and the "autrui". All of a sudden, he understands that the plantation is a limited way of perceiving the world. In Saint-Pierre, he encounters people from every walk of life coming from spaces far beyond the "champs" and "la Grand-case". With regards to identity formation, his encounter with the cultural heterogeneity of "l'En-ville" presents what alternative *identities* look like. As far as Esternome knew up until that point, the only identities that existed were *békés*, *mulâtres*, emancipated slaves, and field slaves. Whether or not Esternome is even able to become a sailor, monk, or a soldier, he can *imagine* assimilating characteristics of these alternative identities (and by extension the spaces where they come from) into his own identity. The description of how Esternome's physical appearance and mannerisms integrate the characteristics of the urban city dweller, "nègre libre d'En-ville," is a perfect example of this assimilation of these alternative identities.

> les nèg-de-terre [...] se taisaient en le voyant surgir avec ses façons de nègre libre d'En-ville: les pieds dans des chaussures eclairées, le fal sous un jabot, la tête prise dans un chapeau à large bord trouvé en quelque nuit au fond d'un casino [...] les poings fermés sur l'usure de ses gants (*Texaco* 105).

Perhaps the wide-brimmed hat is a fashion piece Esternome saw a Dutch sailor wear once, the pair of gloves worn by a French nobleman, the lace jabot worn by a Portuguese merchant, the polished shoes worn by a North American tourist… Not only did these travelers and city dwellers make Esternome realize that his world view had been circumscribed within extremely limited parameters, they also serve as models Esternome can observe and imitate in accordance

with his personal style.[15] The encounter with the cultural heterogeneity of Saint-Pierre transforms him into a "nèg libre d'En-ville". Secondly, "l'En-ville" presents the opportunity to learn "comment savoir y faire" which is ultimately the opportunity to develop self-awareness as a *skilled* worker. This opportunity is offered to everyone notwithstanding their prior knowledge or expertise. It is a treasure trove for anyone who is without any skill and a whetstone for those who already possess skills and desire to learn more. In sum, the only way someone like Esternome becomes a "nèg libre d'En-ville", the only way someone learns "comment savoir y faire" is by *being taken in by* "l'En ville". This idea of *being taken in by* "l'En-ville" is reinforced through the term itself. The transformative power of "l'En-ville" is only accessible if the traveler does not resist the way the city draws them into the experience of being "*en ville.*" "L'En-ville" transforms the traveler into a city dweller through the exposure to its sights, sounds, textures, tastes, and smells. "L'En-ville" teaches the traveler how to become skilled laborer by exposing them to a myriad of odd jobs and part time gigs available all over town. The traveler cannot tap into the city's transformative power unless they become *immersed* in the sensorial experience of the city. When Esternome sees the way the "nèg-de-terre" stand in awe of "l'En-ville", unable to understand how their labor built that space and unable to tap into its transformative power, the narrator expresses a certain frustration and anger. How can they not see? If only they could see "l'En-ville" for what it is truly meant for. The main theme that is conveyed through the narrative of "l'En-ville" is "*if you resist the city, you will miss out on its*

[15] In *The Birth of African-American Culture*, Mintz and Price argue that in response to the violent de-humanization slaves in the Americas underwent, they developed mannerisms and a personal style to differentiate themselves: "this most degrading of all aspects of slavery seems to have had the effect of encouraging the slaves to cultivate an enhanced appreciation for exactly those most personal, most human characteristics which differentiate one individual from another, perhaps the principal qualities which the masters could not take away from them", such as the way they talked, walked, and their sense of humor (51). This combination of an openness to cultural differences and an emphasis of the development of a personal style "produce in early African-American cultures a fundamental dynamism, an expectation of cultural change as an integral feature of these systems" (51).

transformative power." This theme seems to contradict the other major theme developed in the plantation. What is Esternome supposed to do to claim and affirm his identity? More, specifically, *where* does Esternome need to move to affirm this? The conceptualization of space and identity through the narrative of the plantation suggests that staying put hinders his ability to create one's own identity. By contrast, the conceptualization of space and identity through the narrative of the city suggests that it is *only by means of* his passage through and immersion in the city that he can be transformed. Which is it?

At this point in the novel, the narrative points the reader back to a theme that, in light of the dazzling and dizzying description of Saint-Pierre, has faded into the background: the act of *dwelling* as a way of being-in-the-world. "Dwelling" gradually becomes less conspicuous after Esternome's narrative of "l'Habitation" as he enters the "l'En-ville". In summary, one of the first and most poignant descriptions of this theme is Esternome's encounter with "la Grand-case". Esternome admires its architecture and how it "[associe] ces essences" and "[domestique] ces vents" in accordance with the "[...] manières du vent et de la terre" (*Texaco* 60). Esternome is impacted by the way this space comes into existence by using nature in a non-exploitative manner. The "Grand-case" shows Esternome how a space can simultaneously safeguard itself *as well as* the natural resources it draws sustenance from. Esternome reencounters this way of being-in-the-world in the "champs" where the field slaves nourish themselves through their use of the native fauna and flora. They seek neither to exploit nor abandon nature. They safeguard themselves as well as the natural resources they depend on to survive. Moving forward to Esternome's arrival to "l'En-ville", this theme becomes less conspicuous, fading into the background only appearing when Esternome observes "les nèg-de-terre". During his initial exploration of Saint-Pierre, he makes his way towards the periphery. This is what he observes:

> Là, des negrillons jaunes, des négresses à paniers, des nègres au regard bas s'affairaient sous des nasses de bambous, filets, cordes, bouées, madjoumbés. Ils semblaient vénérer ce matériel utile pour survivre de la pêche ou des terres verticales du contrefort des mornes (*Texaco* 84).

In comparison to the city dwellers he encounters in the center of "l'En-ville", these dwellers are different in what they use to survive and how they give meaning to that material. These seemingly unrelated and insignificant items – creels, buoys, fishing lines, musical instruments – collectively serve as the building material for their survival. They seem to "vénérer ce matériel utile" because it safeguards their own survival *as well as* the natural resources of the steep slopes in the countryside and the sea. Similar to the field slaves, they survive by using nature in a non-exploitative manner. However, this remains in the background for Esternome. "L'En-ville" with all its dazzling newness and overwhelming epiphanies eclipses the "dwelling" that these communities use to survive in the periphery of Saint-Pierre. However, this underlying theme re-emerges once again.

While Esternome resentfully observes the way the "nèg-de-terre" remain oblivious to the transformative power of "l'En-ville", he also observes how these very same people

> avaient choisi la terre. La terre pour exister. La terre pour *se nourrir*. La terre à *comprendre*, et terre à *habiter*. Quand les békés brassaient des hectares de cannes à expédier ailleurs, eux *décomptaient* l'igname aux bords de canaris. Quand les milâtres hurlaient des droits [...] eux *dénouaient* les feuillages, *décodaient* les racines, *épiaient* les derniers caraïbes dans leur combat avec la mer [my emphasis] (*Texaco* 109).

This passage presents two key ideas that suggest a response to the question I pose earlier: what is Esternome supposed to do and where is he supposed to go in order to continue his quest? He already has become a "nèg libre d'En-ville" by means of the wardrobe and mannerisms he has adopted from the other city dwellers. He has already gained the skills and expertise as an architect and a jack-of-all trades by means of his apprenticeship with Theodorus Sweetmeats. Most importantly, he has come to a realization that fundamentally changes his understanding of

how “l’En-ville” was created: the slave labor in the “Habitations”, and by extension the labor he executed before emancipation, built this space. And yet, do all of these transformations and realizations collectively equate to the admonition of the “Mentô” to Esternome before he left the plantation, namely to take the lands that the békés had not yet taken and “investir ces lieux” with meaning?

This description of the “nèg-de-terre” strongly provides two major clues. First, his quest for identity has not yet reached its final destination: Esternome needs to continue searching somewhere *in between* “l’Habitation” and “l’En-ville”. “La terre” is a deliberately ambiguous term. It is neither where the “békés brassaient des hectares de cannes à expédier ailleurs” nor where the “milâtres hurlaient des droits.” In other words, *neither* the plantation *nor* the urban space. The “terre” must be a *not-yet taken* space and, as we will explore in the next paragraph, “l’En-ville” has already been taken by the mulattos. While the journey out of the plantation into the urban space does and will continue to play an important role in Esternome’s quest for identity, he still has not reached the not-yet taken space. The second key idea is that it will not be enough to simply *occupy* the not-yet taken space. Collectively, the verbs “se nourrir,” “comprendre,” “habiter,” “décompter,” “dénouer,” “décoder,” “épier” hint at a way of being-in-the-world that was described earlier in the narrative but has been temporarily eclipsed by “l’En-ville”: the act of *dwelling*. To derive nourishment from the land while simultaneously trying to understand it is an example of dwelling. Inhabiting the land while simultaneously taking stock of the yams the land produces, untangling the foliage, and interpreting the density, size, and volume of roots is an example of dwelling. Observing and imitating the methods of subsistence that are practiced by the remaining Amerindian communities of the island is an example of dwelling. Collectively, what the narrator describes is the pursuit of simultaneously safeguarding oneself *as*

well as the land and the resources one uses to survive. Considering this, the theme of dwelling in the background helps the reader notice and interpret the gaps and shortcomings that appear as Esternome is taken in by the movement of universal emancipation that takes place in "l'En-ville". The description of what the "nèg-de-terre" did while the mulattos spearhead the movement of universal emancipation and while the *békés* fight to maintain ownership of the land becomes a sort of admonition to the reader: *the formation of identity can only come through taking not-yet taken spaces and learning to dwell in those spaces*. In the words of the "Mentô", Esternome needs to take these spaces and "investir ces lieux" with *his* meaning.

There is one more formative moment that Esternome will experience in his journey through "l'En-ville": to be *recognized by* "l'En-ville." This is a key moment that will reappear in Marie-Sophie's narrative later in the novel. In the meantime, let us consider what this recognition looks like for Esternome:

> Dans les premiers temps de la liberté confirmée, il dansa avec elle, but-ça et chanta-ça. Ils dansèrent de plus belle quand la mairie ouvrit de gros registres pour recenser les nèg-de-terre et leur offrir l'état civil. [...] D'un trait d'encre, ce dernier les éjecta de leur vie de savane pour une existence officielle sous les patronymes de Ninon Cléopâtre et d'Esternome Laborieux (*Texaco* 144).

It is important to recall that, up until this moment Esternome had reached somewhat of an impasse in his quest: is "l'En-ville" the not-yet taken place he must claim before it is too late or is his not-yet taken place somewhere else? In short, *should he stay or should he keep searching*? The initial experience of being taken in by "l'En-ville" renders Esternome idle and disoriented. He escapes this initial state of "aveuglage" and "embrouillage" by means of exploring the space itself. He encounters people from every walk of life, coming from places far beyond the limited world view he previously had through the plantation. He observes how "l'En-ville" offers to those who come without any skill the opportunity to make a living and, ultimately, acquire a self-

awareness and affirm their identity as “bricoleur-nèg d’En-ville”, “pêcheur-nèg d’En-ville”, “boulanger-nèg d’En-ville”, “architecte-nèg d’En-ville”, et. Esternome himself becomes a “nèg-libre d’En-ville” through this appropriation of fashion and mannerisms of the city-dwellers. And yet, it is unclear whether all of this collectively is what the “Mentô” refers to as taking a not-yet taken place and investing this place with meaning. Has Esternome reached that point? The passage above is more than a description of two formerly emancipated slaves acquiring a civil status. Read in light of Esternome’s quest for identity, this passage represents Esternome’s transition from being a “nègre-Libre d’En-ville” to being *his own person*. The independence of “Esternome Laborieux” does not depend on the document that his former “maître” wrote to corroborate that Esternome is a “libre de savane”. “Esternome Laborieux” is independent by means of his struggle to be recognized as an independent person. In order to understand how Esternome reached this point, when he is officially recognized by “l’En-ville” as a civil status, let us return to “affranchissement”.

When the news of the overthrow of king Louis-Philippe and the establishment of the Second Republic reaches the French West Indies on the twenty-fourth of February, 1848, Esternome and the others come to idolize the French Republic, to hold unrealistic expectations about the *métropole*.

> Les nègresclaves se mirent à voltiger des cochons, poules, paniers, à piéter sur ignames, à danser comme zoulous en s’embrassant-content [...] Des musiciens sortirent des clarinettes et des violons [...] Les rues demeurèrent à la rumeur de liberté, de *France éternelle, de générosité métropolitaine* [...] [Esternome et Ninon] coururent ensemble à travers la place comme courent les enfants [my emphasis] (*Texaco* 112-113).

What does this description denote about Esternome’s character development? His focus has shifted away from his own self-making. The sense of pride and self he derives from honing his knowledge and skills in architecture, building, and repairing has marginal importance in light of

the dazzling promise coming from the generous, eternal *métropole*. In short, Esternome has lost sight of the objective. This idea is emphasized in the following passage:

> Ce bateau charriait la liberté dans les poches d'un commissaire de la belle République [...] Le Packet ne débarqua qu'un équipage malade, des négociants, quelques militaires, puis la nouvelle que Schoelcher abolitionniste était nommé sous-secrétaire [...] Le commissaire de la République [...] annoncé sur le prochain Packet, celui du 10 mai, va ramener-venir la liberté, et il va distribuer toutes les terres, tu comprends, partager toutes les terres pour nous tous, alors je veux être là pour prendre ma part (*Texaco* 121).

The portrayal of the RMS delivering the document containing the freedom that they had been longing for is unconventional and somewhat comical. The fanfare and glory with which they expected the vessel that carried the beloved freedom from "la belle République" is juxtaposed with a pathetic scene of malnourished crew members, merchants, soldiers disembarking from a long voyage across the Atlantic. The childlike joy and anticipation they experienced when they first heard the news of the revolution is juxtaposed with a delayed and disappointing announcement that their freedom and the redistribution of the land will come in the *next* delivery on May 10. This anticlimactic and comical description reinforces the idea that was conveyed implicitly in the previous passage: "la belle République" is not the answer to their prayers. Their freedom is not something that can be given or gifted by some overseas legislative assembly caught up in political turmoil. No matter how much they idolize and venerate the Republic that abolished the institution that denied their human rights, this does not grant them their freedom. For all the "commissaire de la belle République" cares, the slaves can wait for the next ship eternally until they die. What does Esternome do?

Faced with the disappointing message from "le commissaire", Esternome makes his way back to the "habitation". Comparable to the period shortly after his emancipation, Esternome wanders because he has no idea where to go or what to do. The static and uncertain circumstances in "l'En-ville" force him to move. Here, serendipitously, he finds a sort of

response. *They need to take their freedom*. This message is spoken by none other than the enigmatic but omnipresent figure that told him to leave the plantation in the first place: the "Mentô". Except, this second message is less obscure: "Yo di zo libèté pa ponm kanel an bou branch! Fok zot désann raché-y, raché-y, raché-y!... (Liberté n'est pas une pomme-canelle en bout de branche! Il faut vous l'arracher…)" (*Texaco* 128). The narrator makes a clear allusion to the first admonition of the "Mentô": to go and claim the not-yet taken place. There are only two instances where the "Mentô" appears in Esternome's story to give a sort of admonition to Esternome that suggests the taking possession of something not-yet-taken. The sparse occurrence of these moments, in addition to the fact that the "Mentô" cannot be called upon, draws special attention to this figure and the words he says. This figure appears and speaks so seldom that when he does emerge and speak, the narrative makes the reader sit at the edge of their seat and listen closely. What interpretation could be attributed to this second admonition: "*liberté n'est pas une pomme-canelle en bout de branche! Il faut vous l'arracher*"? On the one hand, the verb "arracher" suggests that taking possession of freedom is an act that requires violence and aggression. In comparison to the "Mentô's" first message, this second one carries a greater sense of urgency. Does this mean that freedom is more important than taking the not-yet taken "lieux"? On the other hand, describing "freedom" through the metaphor "une pomme cannelle en bout de branche" suggests that this not-yet taken thing can often be deceiving. The connotation of decadence and temptation conveyed through this metaphor suggests that the craving for what is new and dazzling can and often does *distract* Esternome in his quest. If this interpretation seems to echo the earlier passage where the overabundance of decadence of the "l'En-ville" renders Esternome idle and lost, *it is intentional*. The connection between these moments throughout the text is reinforced by the repetition of descriptors such as "*aveuglage*", "*embrouillage*", "*zombis*",

"*dégénéresence*", "*garé*", and "*havre*" as well as the narrator's conspicuous suspicion of the French Republic and assimilation. This leads the reader back to the earlier question about "l'En-ville" – *is this the not-yet taken place the "Mentô" described?* – and adds another layer of inquiry – *is the pursuit of freedom the main objective?* In other words, does the act of "arracher" freedom render the quest for identity by means of taking and investing a "lieu" with meaning no longer necessary? Is the acquisition of freedom enough? Does the recognition from "l'En-ville" suffice?

When "l'En-ville" comes under the control of Esternome, the field laborers, and the "mîlatres", it seems as if Esternome has succeeded in taking a not-yet taken place.

> L'En-ville demeurait aux nègres errants, aux milâtres à paroles qui petitionnaient auprès du gouverneur [...] Le pays battait dans une désolation. Les bitations retentissaient des ripailles negresses. Par ici et par là: des champs incendiés, des clôtures renversées, des bœufs égarés, des moulins immobiles, des Grandes-cases gueules ouvertes, ruinées ou malement closes. Des bougres allaient porteurs du gros sac des pillages (*Texaco* 135)

It seems as though the "Mentô's" advice had worked. Not only does Esternome receive official, legal recognition from "l'En-ville" by receiving his official name "Esternome Laborieux", "l'En-ville" itself becomes *his* realm. The verb choice "demeurer" suggests a kind of permanence, attachment even, in their occupation of "l'En-ville". Is this the fulfillment of the quest to take a not-yet taken place and invest it with meaning? In order to better interpret the sequence of events that follows the siege of "l'En-ville", it is necessary to recall an earlier passage:

> [les nèg-de-terre] avaient choisi la terre. La terre pour exister. La terre pour se nourrir. La terre à comprendre, et terre à habiter. Quand les békés brassaient des hectares de cannes à expédier ailleurs, eux décomptaient l'igname aux bords de canaris. Quand les milâtres hurlaient des droits [...] eux dénouaient les feuillages, décodaient les racines, épiaient les derniers caraïbes dans leur combat avec la mer (*Texaco* 109).

While Esternome, the "nèg-libre d'En-ville", the "mîlatres" remained occupied with the happenings in "l'En-ville", the "nèg-de-terre" chose "la terre" to study and to understand. While

the “mîlatres” were busy taking administrative positions to take control of the urban space, the “nèg-de-terre” were digging through soil and decoding hidden messages in the roots. While Esternome was busy leading field laborers to “l’En-ville” to “arracher” their freedom, the “nèg-de-terre” were counting their yams. As I demonstrated earlier, the word choice in this description is important because it puts into relief the symbiotic relationship between the “nèg-de-terre” and space itself. Verbs such as “exister,” “se nourrir,” “habiter” strongly suggest notions of permanence, rootedness, and non-exploitative ways of being-in-the-world. Furthermore, the verbs “décompter,” “dénouer,” “décoder” convey a sort of communication between the inhabitants and the space itself. To decode something implies that there is a message being sent. The interpretation of a personified “terre” communicating with its inhabitants through messages encoded in its roots is reinforced by the word itself “terre.” There are a few instances in the narrative where the word “terre” is used to describe space. The most salient example is the description of Esternome’s journey away from “l’Habitation”: “une terre jamais plate, dressée en verdure vierge, enchantée d’oiseaux-chants et des siffles de bêtes-longues” (*Texaco* 79). These passages describe “la terre” as a space that is often disregarded or misunderstood by spatial configurations like the “l’Habitation” and “l’En-ville”. The *békés* are so busy in the enterprise of “[brasser] des hectares de cannes à expédier ailleurs” that they come to believe that the world revolves around the “Habitation” and the space outside is barren and empty. The *mîlatres* follow a similar pattern. As they “[hurlent] des droits,” the *mîlatres* become so consumed in the politics of “l’En-ville” that they have no time to pay any heed to the “nèg-de-terre” and “la terre” itself. In short, “la terre” is a disregarded space that is not only full of life, but also, it is a being that communicates with those who choose to know how to inhabit it. The ones who are able to achieve this feat are the “nèg-de-terre”.

These passages of “nèg-de-terre” and “la terre” are relevant in interpreting the events that follow the siege of “l’En-ville” because they highlight exactly what Christine Chivallon argues with regards to the relationship between space and identity: “il n’y a pas d'identité venue à forme sans travail sur et par l’espace” (Chivallon *Espace* 30). In what follows, the narrative describes the ramifications that come from Esternome and the other emancipated slaves’ disregard of the “lieu”. First, the békés reappear to reclaim what was theirs.

> le citoyen béké revenant d’on ne sait où, parla de reprendre le travail [...] il se faufila dans la Grande-case dont il ouvrit volet après volet [...] La simple réouverture de la Grande-case coula une langueur parmi les cases à nèg [...] Une fois, sans regarder personne ni ceux qui le guettaient, Béké, suivi du commandeur, sortit jauger son champ (*Texaco* 145).

What seemed to have been a definitive expulsion of the “békés” from “l’En-ville” and the “habitations” was merely a temporary pause in their enterprise. In the laborers’ struggle to claim their freedom, in obtaining recognition from “la belle République” as citizens, this same process simultaneously prompts the *békés* to take back what “belongs” to them. To the new citizens’ chagrin, the *békés* do exactly that and reclaim and regain control over their realm. The “habitation” was still *their* place: “avec des phrases bonnement belles [...] le bougre avait dit: La terre appartient au Bon Dieu, oui mais les champs appartiennent aux békés et aux propriétaires" (*Texaco* 145-146).

What about “l’En-ville”? Did the struggle for freedom not make “l’En-ville” the realm of the “mîlatres” and the laborers? Not exactly: “avec ses mîlatres en affaire d'élections, ses anciens nègres libres retrouvant leurs routines, l’En-ville se remettait en marche sans grincement [...] Il est vrai fout’ que liberté est tout ce que tu veux, citoyen, mais c’est pas le travail” (*Texaco* 148). Following the *békés*, the *mîlatres* follow suit. They reclaim their former realm of urban administration by setting the municipal elections in motion. Consequently, the new citizens, such as Esternome and Ninon, return to their former routines. Having no place to claim as their own,

the “anciens nègres” are left with no choice other than fulfilling their role in “l’En-ville”: to work. Though it appears that it was shared momentarily, “l’En-ville” does not belong to people like Esternome; it had been the realm of the “mîlatres” since the beginning. Furthermore, the personification of “l’En-ville” emphasizes an unchanging quality of this space. The line “L’En-ville se remettait en marche sans grincement” conveys the idea that, slavery or no slavery, monarchy or no monarchy, “l’En-ville” is a relentless force that grows and expands through the grueling labor of the plantations that sustain it. “L’En-ville” grows and expands through the merchants, investors, and travelers that run its commerce and trade. Most importantly, “l’En-ville” grows and expands through the overabundant source of cheap labor from people like Esternome that build and repair its buildings, cook its meals, launder its clothes, clean its lodgings. Pre and post-emancipation, this fundamental aspect of “l’En-ville” remains the same and unwavering: work must and will get done. In the words of the city administrators, “il est vrai fout’ que liberté est tout ce que tu veux, citoyen, mais c’est pas le travail” (*Texaco* 148). When the advent of freedom promises Esternome a new beginning, the resuming of “l’En-ville’s” normal operations commands Esternome to get back to work.

With no place to call his own and the effortless way in which he is forced to return to his former routine, Esternome and the rest of the laborers enter a state of disorientation and confusion worse than the state of “aveuglage” and “embrouillage” that Esternome experiences during the initial period in “l’En-ville.” Freedom becomes a chore and the very same authorities that were meant to uphold and enforce the central tenets of freedom become the greatest threat.

> autour de lui, plus rien n'était clair à comprendre. [...] Liberté s'était faite un travail à contrat, avec livret, avec passeport. Le moindre contrat de plus d’un an pour quelconque béké faisait de toi un homme à décorer. Les contrats de moins d’un an te livraient aux vindictes des patrouilles vérifiant ton livret. [...] où habitez-vous, et qu’est-ce que vous faites le reste du temps, parasite de la République!? (*Texaco* 156-157).

This disheartening depiction of Esternome and the *affranchis* emphasizes "freedom's" insufficiency. "Liberté" is reduced to the degree to which a *béké* makes use of the *affranchis*. "Liberté", in summary, is hijacked by the *békés*, the ones against whom Esternome and every laborer fought to obtain their freedom in the first place. Through this passage, it becomes even more clear why the aforementioned passage of the "nèg-de-terre" is crucial in interpreting this post-abolition transformation in "l'En-ville". In addition to this passage, it is necessary to recall another even earlier passage where the narrator describes the very same way of being-in-the-world: the field laborers of "l'Habitation" who survive a food shortage by their occupation of the "alentours".

> [...] Un retard advint dans les voiliers du bourg, causant une pénurie des boucauts de morue, de bœuf salé et de pois secs qui constituaient l'ordinaire du manger [...] [le béké] vit alors son garde-manger tomber au maigre. Les esclaves eux, familiers des ventres flasques, ramenèrent de jardins invisibles de quoi tenir sur le poids de leur corps. De plus, ils surent empoigner les zabitans à la rivière, enivrer les lapias avec un jus d'écorce, piéger la chair d'un gibier migrateur (*Texaco* 62).

> [les nèg-de-terre] avaient choisi la terre. La terre pour exister. La terre pour se nourrir. La terre à comprendre, et terre à habiter. Quand les békés brassaient des hectares de cannes à expédier ailleurs, eux décomptaient l'igname aux bords de canaris. Quand les milâtres hurlaient des droits [...] eux dénouaient les feuillages, décodaient les racines, épiaient les derniers caraïbes dans leur combat avec la mer (*Texaco* 109).

Even though these are two separate instances in two completely different spatial configurations at different points in the narrative, the striking similarities between these scenes bring to the foreground the central theme of this whole novel: the importance of place. Like a diptych, while they clearly frame two separate moments in the narrative, they simultaneously emphasize the flow and continuity of these two scenes. The continuity between these passages is illustrated through phrases such as "*ramenèrent de jardins invisibles de quoi tenir sur le poids de leur corps*" and "*[ils] avaient choisi [...] la terre pour se nourrir*", "*surent [...] enivrer les lapias avec un jus d'écorce*" and "*décomptaient l'igname [...] décodaient les racines*"... These two

passages tell a story of a certain kind of freedom. In contrast to the "freedom" Esternome experiences post-abolition, the freedom that the field slaves in "l'Habitation" experience is not contingent on any kind any formal recognition. They are free insofar as they are the owners of their own survival. Without the permission of the *békés*, they chose to become familiar with the "alentours". Without paying any regard to the authority of their *maîtres*, they shifted their attention to "la terre" that had been left at their disposal, studied its plants, learned how to use tree sap for cooking, become familiar with the species of fish and fowl of "la terre"... In doing so, they were claiming "la terre" as their "lieu" and investing it with meaning: *this is our sustenance*. The same motifs reappear in the second diptych. Their freedom does not depend on a verification of employment; their survival is not contingent on the provisions or shelters of "l'En-ville". They are free insofar as they choose an alternative way of being-in-the-world that is not part of or contributes to "l'En-ville's" mode of operation. They are free *by virtue of* choosing an alternative place for their survival: "[ils] avaient choisi la terre". The "nèg-de-terre" reinforce *Texaco*'s underlying message by choosing "la terre": to go into the spaces that "les békés et les mulâtres jusqu'alors n'avaient pas investi" (*Texaco* 158). The occupation of not-yet-taken spaces, transformation of those spaces according to the uniqueness of its inhabitants, and the subsequent creation of personal meaning and safeguarding of that meaning is the only thing that matters and will stand the test of time. Drastic changes far beyond the control of its occupants will take place: dissolution of monarchies, establishment of provisional emancipation, natural disasters, industrial revolutions. Through these changes and evolutions, the ongoing quest to create "lieux" and protect them in defiance of the most adverse circumstances not only makes life livable but also *meaningful*.

Part V: Conclusion

Marie-Sophie eventually assumes her father's role in carrying out the development and establishment of Texaco the shantytown. The narrative's shift away from Esternome to Marie-Sophie brings to the foreground two important ideas that were described at the beginning of this chapter. First, it emphasizes that *Texaco* is not a narrative of personal growth that focuses on one character's journey; *Texaco* is not the story of Esternome or Marie-Sophie. *Texaco* is an autobiography of place illustrated by the fact that the task of building and defending Texaco the shantytown necessitates the participation of a new character, an individual who is better suited to sustain Texaco's development in its latter phases. This leads to the second idea: the reason why Marie-Sophie becomes the character who carries out the establishment of Texaco the shantytown is that for Marie-Sophie, even after she experiences the destruction of her shantytown, even after she experiences the increasing hostility and difficulty that protecting this space entails, *she still decides to stay*.

Like her father, she experiences her own version of leaving behind a site that is equivalent to "l'Habitation" and searching for and claiming a not-yet taken place as her own. Among the reasons why Esternome decides to leave Saint-Pierre behind, he moves to the countryside because he realizes that the "l'En-ville" has already been claimed by the *békés*: "Ville haute. Ville massive. Ville porteuse d'une mémoire dont ils étaient exclus. Pour eux, l'En-ville demeurait *impénétrable*. Lisse. *Ciré*. […] L'En-ville c'était une Grand-case. La Grand-case des Grand-cases" (*Texaco* 107). Reiterated by his encounter with the "nèg-de-terre" who lived on the outskirts of "l'En-ville", Esternome eventually decides to leave the city behind and search for a not-yet take place that he can cultivate, shape, and claim as his own, which ends up being the "mornes" in the outskirts of Saint-Pierre. In this site, Esternome creates a space that builds upon

all his previous experiences and personal preferences. In other words, this space becomes his space because it is meaningful to *him*: Esternome "[apprend] à déposer nos cases sur des terrasses creusés dans la pente vertical, à les crocheter à l'os d'une roche si l'os de roche est là. Les accorer de terre. Apprendre l'appui sur le bord de l'à-pic pour l'entrée de la case." (*Texaco* 168-169). He uses his personal experiences in the past when he would explore the architecture of the "Grand-case", when he became a jack-of-all trades and learned how to build houses as the apprentice of Theodorus Sweetmeats, to inform and shape his present. Moreover, this space is meaningful not only because its architect imbued the space with his own experiences, it is meaningful because the space itself signifies its constituents: "Quartier créole est une permission de la géographie. C'est pourquoi on dit Fond-ceci, Morne-cela, Ravine-ceci, Ravine-cela… *C'est la forme de la terre qui nomme le groupe de gens*" (*Texaco* 171) [my emphasis]. For the first time in Esternome's narrative, the reader observes the specific identification of a collectivity based on the constituents' connection to a specific space.

The development of a collective identity, the "quartier créole" as described by Esternome, emerges from a direct and deliberate appropriation of space *who* (not as a thing but as a personified figure) *in turn signifies its constituents*. Space becomes animated and comes to signify Esternome and his collective community through their reverence to the space they occupy. Esternome even earns the nickname "docteur-cases" (*Texaco* 173). What happens to the "quartier créole"? This is after all the first, most concrete example of Texaco the shantytown's maturation; *it was beginning to take shape*. The problem that prevented Esternome from preserving this space, that gradually led him to leave the "quartier créole" behind and join the rest of his community in Saint-Pierre was not a personal flaw in Esternome. Rather, Esternome

leaves because this early, nascent form of Texaco the shantytown was simply unable to sustain its constituents in the same way "l'En-ville" could:

> Les mornes n'avaient ni écoles, ni lumières. On se retrouvait en face du vaste ciel posé comme un couvercle, un petit peu unquiet, quelquefois démuni, toujours sans perspective, et les hauts immobiles ne souffraient pièce faiblesse. Ainsi, d'année en année, les Traces marrones se mirent à descendre vers l'Usine. Y'avait là une chance (*Texaco* 181).

Esternome and the rest of the "quartier créole" leave behind the "mornes" because by comparison to the new opportunities – such as education, electricity, and most importantly a steady source of income – provided by the industrialization of Saint-Pierre, this nascent version of Texaco the shantytown was simply too new and underdeveloped. However, simply because this site is abandoned by its former inhabitants, the development of Texaco the shantytown actually continues.

Far from signaling its demise, this early period of development is picked up when Marie-Sophie becomes the new architect and guardian of the new "quartier créole" in the outskirts of Fort-de-France. Except when she assumes the role, she decides to stay and defend the place by bringing what Texaco the shantytown lacked and needed from "l'En-ville". Like the aerial roots of the banyan tree, Marie-Sophie moves across space to acquire and bring nutrients that Texaco the shantytown needs to survive and in turn sustain its constituent parts. Like her father, Marie-Sophie undergoes a similar experience of exploration. Wide-eyed and curious about the contents of "l'En-ville", she ventures into Fort-de-France and works all sorts of "djobs" like her father did in Saint-Pierre: "Échouée dans Fort-de-France comme lui l'avait été dans l'antan de Saint-Pierre, je devais, au bout de ses échecs, sans autre choix possible, *tenter* de pénétrer l'En-ville" (*Texaco* 258) [my emphasis]. The key word here is "tenter", because like her father, Marie-Sophie eventually recognizes that Fort-de-France was not a not-yet taken place; it was a "lieu de

passage": "Plus que jamais l'En-ville, où j'étais pourtant née, m'apparaissait comme un lieu de passage. Je raccrochais au souvenir de mon cher Esternome avec l'idée de rebrousser sa trajectoire" (*Texaco* 289). Marie-Sophie becomes aware of the futility in staying in Fort-de-France; she saw greater prospect in taking and applying what she learned from her father (and from her experience in working in several "djobs" in Fort-de-France) somewhere else. The aerial roots of Texaco the shantytown traverse space once more and drop anchor in the outskirts of Fort-de-France where the rest of the story will unfold.

In the early stages of the construction of Texaco, Marie-Sophie begins to feel isolated and is drawn back to the sounds of "l'En-ville": "je me réfugiais dans les bruits de l'En-ville. Bruits des balais-koulis […] bruits de marchandes d'avant-jour" (*Texaco* 333). But instead of abandoning Texaco, she finds herself engaged in "clandestine resistance, in so far as survival and creativity in adverse circumstances are in themselves resistance" (Gallagher 168). The opposition she experiences in building Texaco produces in her an even stronger desire to protect it by whichever means necessary. While Esternome's "quartier créole" in the countryside was "an affirmation of liberty and of freedom of manoeuvre […] opening this space up to a versatility of materials and compositions" (McCusker "Constructing" 52), Marie-Sophie's spatial configuration gradually becomes more and more sedimented and fixed as a result of the frequent and increasingly violent encounters with hegemonic culture. When they enter "Le temps de fibrocement", she and her community are initially overjoyed for they saw in the appropriation of cement a greater prospect for security: ""*Hmm bondieu seigneur*…! *Le fibrocement*… quitter la paille et le bois-caisse et l'à-plat de fer blanc, pour une caye en ciment ! *C'était l'hymne de chacun* ! Tu ne peux pas comprendre, Oiseau de Cham, c'était *un contentement*" (Chamoiseau *Texaco* 341). However, "such images of a triumphant and definitive realization are accompanied

and offset by an encroaching sense of being weighed down by a set of unfamiliar and oppressive fears and desires" (McCusker "Constructing" 57). Unlike the "quartier créole" of Esternome's houses in the countryside, this version of Texaco the shantytown emerges *as a result of the need to survive* in an increasingly hostile environment. Texaco's gradual transformation occurred out of a necessity for survival: "whether scavenged from other sites or donated by the city government, they all reflect the need to make do with whatever materials are at hand" (Prieto 242). The fact that Texaco the shantytown progressively becomes denser and tougher is in part a reaction to the transformation of the propagation of urbanization and industrialization: "nos cases avaient refleuri des décombres avec plus d'obstinée que la rêche herbe folle" (Chamoiseau *Texaco* 436). The more hostile and invasive Fort-de-France became, the more defensive and protective Texaco became. This is manifested in Marie-Sophie's declaration: "partir… non, j'avais choisi Texaco. Je vais rester ici" (*Texaco* 395). Similar to how the "cases" became more obstinate with each time they were destroyed and re-built, the desire to protect, preserve, and belong to this place is only *intensified* as a result of the increasingly hostile environment.

There is one last point worth noting in Marie-Sophie's decision to stay in Texaco. During "Le temps béton", as a result of being under attack by the C.R.S. and switching to steel for building material, the reconstruction of Texaco inevitably becomes more cumbersome: "car le béton était plus cher, plus lourd, plus encombrant. Détruit c'était une catastrophe dont on ne pouvait se relever à l'aise" (*Texaco* 446). One would be likely to assume that due to the overwhelming burden of re-building Texaco under the weight of steel and the attacks from the French national police, Marie-Sophie and the community of Texaco would finally decide to leave the shantytown and move back into "l'En-ville". It has already been made clear that the more aggressive the attacks become, the tougher the material of hegemonic culture becomes, the

more intensely Marie-Sophie preserves and protects her shantytown. However, there is another reason that is mentioned at the end of the text: “les assistants sociales nous poussaient à partir en casiers d’achèlème (comment y faire un poule et lever un cochon?) […] je ressentais plus que tout autre cette menace d’écrasement malgré notre béton” (*Texaco* 472-473). Marie-Sophie she perceives the act of moving into an H.L.M. in the “l’En-ville” is more threatening and more crushing than the weight of the steel and the constant attacks of the C.R.S. What was she afraid of losing? What did she have there in Texaco that she would lose if she moved into an H.L.M.? What did Texaco give her that was so important that she would be willing to risk her life for it? The answer I propose is *independence*: “j’avais derrière ma case mon ti-jardin créole, ma caloge de poules et mes deux lapins” (*Texaco* 475). Her decision to stay in Texaco the shantytown was a combination of multiple factors. The ability to appropriate and rehabilitate the plantation system for her own benefit was no longer possible in “l’En-ville”, which is why she left in the first place. She decides to stay, even if she is initially drawn back to “l’En-ville”, due to the fact that hegemonic culture has become increasingly hostile toward her and her community. She and her town become more defensive and protective as a result of the continued attacks and the transition into the “Age of Concrete” and then the “Age of Steel”. However, the last reason why she decides to stay is because she fears that the moment she complies with the French government’s wishes for her to move into an H.L.M., she will lose her autonomy to decide how, where, and when she can live her life. She enjoys being able to have her own creole garden, a chicken coop, and two rabbits to provide her with food and medicine. Moving into an H.L.M. to her means giving up her independence to have those privileges. The new definition of the Caribbean place, according to the narrative of Marie-Sophie, is a permanent place of dwelling. Independence is one of the central characteristics of that permanent place of dwelling. In summary, I quote

Maeve McCusker to illustrate how the autobiography of Texaco can serve as a narrative of growth for all Caribbean peoples, especially French West Indians: “for virtually the entire Caribbean population, the very idea of having a place where they belong, or indeed a place which belongs to them, is shot through with painful contradictions and an intense sense of yearning” (McCusker “Constructing” 43). In response to the numerous forces that encumber French West Indians’ ability to develop an intimate connection with the Caribbean space, Texaco the shantytown responds: *hold onto me*.

CONCLUSION:

In *The Ghosts of Berlin*, Brian Ladd uses the concept of "critical reconstruction" to describe the approach that urban planners used to reconstruct specific areas in Berlin, Friedrichstadt in particular, after the reunification of Germany in the 1990s: "what had been a troubling specter of modernity and upheaval is now a *comforting link to an idealized past*. Critical reconstruction reaches back beyond world wars, dictatorships, and modern urban experiments and finds a Berlin identity in the decades before 1914" [my emphasis] (109). My interest in Ladd's argument lies in the way he highlights a potential issue in the concept of "critical reconstruction," a concept that has and continues to be influential in the literary movement of *créolité*, specifically through the various literary representations of urban spaces in the Caribbean such as Texaco the shantytown. The particular way in which the urban planners of Berlin during the 1990s leveraged the positive association Berliners had with the metropolis of the 1920s to reconstruct areas of the city effectively brushed over discomforting memories and essentially created an artificial illusion of "*the good old days*" for late twentieth-century Berliners eager to leave the horrors of WWII and the Cold War in the past. The potential issues associated with this backwards-looking, somewhat anachronistic form of urban planning are questions worth asking with regards to the approach to spatial configurations and urban planning that *créoliste* texts such as *Texaco* endorse through their representation of a space like Texaco the shantytown. Although critical reconstruction does not necessarily resist the trends of globalization, one can argue that this kind of urban planning may often find itself *at odds with* certain ideas of what development and modernity should look like and, in doing so, burden urban dwellers with a certain obligation to preserve a specific version of space that has become not

only increasingly demanding to maintain but are also incongruous with modern, cosmopolitan ways of being-in-the-world,

Through this lens, one can imagine Marie-Sophie as an urban planner tasked with a particularly challenging duty. Her formative role in bringing Texaco the shantytown into existence in the outskirts of Fort-de-France, defending the space when urban planners demand the community to vacate their "petits-cases", and reconstructing the space after every police raid, entails a tricky negotiation between her desire, on the one hand, to defend the place she created and invested with personal meaning and her own well-being (as well as the well-being of the people who participate in that community), on the other. The battle for the preservation of Texaco the shantytown does not derive from a superficial preference for a certain way of life that was more pleasant or "provincial" than the alternative offered by Fort-de-France. This battle is inextricably linked with the dwellers' *right to signify themselves* through their connection to a space they created by themselves. The importance of Marie-Sophie's struggle is unquestionable for it carries the weight not only of her right to create meaning for herself, but also her father, her ancestors, and most importantly future generations' right to create meaning for themselves. It is worth asking, however, if and to what degree critical revisionism plays a role in the battle to defend Texaco the shantytown. In moments when Marie-Sophie grows weary from the ongoing struggle to protect her space and her way of being-in-the-world, the narrative illustrates how reminiscence plays a role to alleviate the exhaustion and counter the discouragement she experiences in the present. The memories of her father when he lived in the "quartier créole" in the countryside, even if she did not experience them herself, serve as a comforting link to an idealized past. Esternome's brief period in the "mornes" was far from perfect and Marie-Sophie demonstrates awareness of this by rejoicing when the "Temps de Bois-Caisse" concluded.

Yet, the certain version of the past that ends up bringing comfort to Marie-Sophie in the "Temps de Fibrociment" is not the accurate version of the "Temps de Paille" that considers its areas of improvement; it is necessarily an *idealized* version of this age that is compatible with the generalized notion of "the good old days". This raises fair questions: do the memories of her father's apogee (when he earned the name "docteur-cases") during the "Temps de Paille" inform the approach Marie-Sophie employs when she undertakes the urban planning of Texaco the shantytown? If so, to what degree does this critical reconstruction underscore or perhaps completely disregard aspects of Esternome's "livable forms of life" that should be revised? Is the battle for the preservation of the space she also created a battle to preserve a connection to an idealized past? Could and under what circumstances could Texaco the shantytown eventually become an artificial, unsustainable reproduction of the "good old days"? Could Texaco the shantytown become a hindrance for those who want to participate in a different version of progress? Could this space come to house the hostility that was inherent in "l'Habitation" and "l'En-ville"? Most importantly, considering how exhausting and demoralizing the battle to defend Texaco the shantytown can become, when does her ongoing struggle to maintain a certain version of Texaco the shantytown become an issue (for herself and the other dwellers)? Is the fight still worth fighting when the preservation of Texaco comes at the expense of her well-being and the well-being of Texaco's constituents?

This line of inquiry opens further analysis that goes beyond the scope of this dissertation. Contemporary Hispanic Caribbean writers such as Carlos Manuel Álvarez in his novel *Los caídos* and Rosario Ferré in her anthology of short stories *Maldito amor* both explore how a "home" – either as a family or a space invested with historical meaning – can become, in the words of Timothy Cresswell, "an oppressive, confining and even terrifying place" (109). These

writers illustrate how the preservation of a space invested with meaning and maintaining the connection to that space even if it has come to signify its constituents for many years can have pernicious consequences. In *Los caídos*, Álvarez illustrates how excessive boredom can lead to a family's ruin in spite of its well-intentioned decision to remain together even through the worst hardships: "el aburrimiento, es la razón principal por la que los pollos inofensivos, los pollos terriblemente inofensivos, los pollos mortalmente inofensivos, terminan picoteándose unos a otros, comiéndose las vísceras" (Álvarez 130). Álvarez's novel leads to the line of inquiry that questions the ethical implications of creating and preserving a shantytown like Texaco. It is true that the dwellers eventually win a small victory and procure electricity from Fort-de-France for their shantytown. Still, at what cost and for how much longer would the struggle last to continue bringing desirable aspects of modernity to Texaco the shantytown? What would happen if future generations of the shantytown disavow the ways of being-in-the-world that their parents and grandparents practiced in favor of a more cosmopolitan way of being-in-the-world? Would it still be necessary to preserve Texaco the shantytown? Would Texaco the shantytown eventually become a generational burden instead of an inheritance? This leads to the question Rosario Ferré poses on the usefulness of maintaining a connection to an idealized version of the past. *Maldito amor* illustrates how the desire to maintain a connection to spaces that celebrate an idealized version of Puerto Rico's history, namely the plantation and the culture associated with that space, is ultimately a pointless endeavor and is at odds with actual progress and improvement:

> en el pasado los guanameños nos sentíamos orgullosos de nuestro pueblo y de nuestro valle […] en nuestros bailes y celebraciones se tocaba solo música refinada, que alimentará nuestro sentido estético […] hoy todo esto ha cambiado. Lejos de ser un paraíso, nuestro pueblo se ha convertido en un enorme embudo por el cual se vierte noche y día hacia Norteamérica el aterrador remolino de azúcar que vomita la Central Ejemplo (Ferré 17-19).

Ferré's astute criticism of the idealized version of Puerto Rico's past resonates with scholarship on the *créolité* movement that considers how this literature is "anti-modern and anti-cosmopolitan. Richard and Sally Price consider, for example, that the exoticizing tendencies of the literary créolité are 'complicitous with the celebration of a museumified Martinique'" (Gallagher *Soundings* 40). The first space that *Texaco* revisits and represents in a more congenital way is the plantation, "a realm where the workers, descendants of the enslaved and/or indentured, are all […] caught up in the poverty trap" (Gallagher 159). Considering this, could *Texaco*'s revisionist vision of the past be "complicitous" with the celebration of a more palatable version of Martinique that is disconnected from the concerns and desires of twenty-first century French West Indians?

Are the ways of being-in-the-world that are modeled by Esternome and Marie-Sophie at certain moments in the novel celebrated partially because they are at odds with the progression and advancement of modernity and cosmopolitan urbanity? This is a valid question because while the heterogeneity of Texaco the shantytown celebrates diversity of thought and openness to the adoption of both modern and former methods to urban planning, it is unclear whether Marie-Sophie's heterogeneous approach to urban planning derives in part the narrator's difficulty in relating to other spaces and ways of being-in-the-world that are *incompatible with* the more comforting idea of a "musemified Martinique". Even though "Chamoiseau's manifest conviction that what will prevail of créolité is the rendezvous with global diversity and relationality, Richard and Sally Price have noted the rigid insularity of the movement, demonstrated by its failure to relativize itself even within the local Caribbean context" (Gallagher 41). Marie-Sophie's approach to urban planning that employs a certain degree of critical reconstruction in the inception and preservation of Texaco the shantytown is just one

among several different approaches practiced by Caribbean peoples to signify themselves as *Caribbean*. The work of this dissertation opens onto the further exploration of ways through which Caribbean peoples have created meaning for themselves, how they identify themselves, that do *not* employ a revisionist approach that is sustained by a comforting link to an idealized past. After all, is this not what the autobiography of Juan Francisco Manzano and Avellaneda's romantic novel depict: *how* and *where* meaning is created in each narrative is determined by the narrator's personal preference? For the narrator of the *Autobiografía*, the flourishing, cosmopolitan city of Havana, and a different life made possible by that city, is where and how the narrator creates meaning for himself. For the narrator of *Sab*, the small-scale plantation, the natural environment, and the interior of Cuba is where and how the narrator creates meaning for herself? To cite another example of a contemporary French West Indian writer, Maryse Condé argues that "though born in the Caribbean, she was not born a Caribbean: she became one" (Nyatetu-Waigwa 552). Unlike the revisionist approach that *créoliste* writers use to establish a comforting link to the past, even if it is somewhat idealized, Condé becomes a Caribbean by *moving past* the desire to create a connection with a past that she does not identify with: "'We finally understood why we were so ill at ease in the African culture. It is not our culture. We were the bearers of the Antillean culture that we carried within us without realizing it…' The reason they did not realize it, Condé seems to say, was Négritude" (Nyatetu-Waigwa 552). For Condé, the measures taken to signify herself, to create meaning for herself should not derive from an artificial connection with a past culture, which she identifies as African culture, for the simple fact that African culture is not *personal* to her. Could the same argument be applied to distinguish the culture of the "Temps de Paille" for someone living in the "Temps de Béton"?

By way of conclusion, and in attempt to guide the reader towards a new avenue for further inquiry, I quote a passage from Chamoiseau's most recent novel, *La matière de l'absence*: "Ce qui manque nous remplit de désir, ce désir se maintient, il vit de notre vie, nous donne à vivre dans une ardente tension, nous attelle au devenir ainsi. Cela confère de la substance autant à ce que nous avons qu'à ce que nous n'avons pas. Ou que nous n'avons plus" (362). Through this passage, Chamoiseau proposes a distinct approach to the creation of meaning. Loss, displacement, abandonment, disappearance, estrangement, dispossession, all of which are experiences that permeate the psyche of the collective consciousness of Caribbean peoples, are experiences characterized by a *lack of* something. The exploration, creation, appreciation, and preservation of spaces, as we explore in this dissertation, is one of the primary ways we can observe the recovery and reinvention of what was lost, taken, abandoned, or destroyed. However imperfect the reproduction of what was lost turns out to be – whether it be the "quartier créole" in the countryside or Texaco the shantytown in the outskirts of Fort-de-France – it effectively provides solace, comfort, and a meaningful life to the ones who create that space for themselves. What the passage above suggests is that the experience of *lacking* something, to feel like something is missing, is in itself the substance that gives meaning to someone who never had or no longer has something. Following this line of thought, what does the creation of a space do in this process? If the substance of "ce qui manque" is found in the experience of longing for that lost thing, what is the result of the measures taken to create a space like Texaco the shantytown and inhabit a space in the way Marie-Sophie does? Does the meaning that comes from the creation of a space "donne à vivre dans une ardente tension, nous attelle au devenir ainsi" in the same way that the desire for "ce qui manque" does? Is the creation of space just an externalization of the internalized longing to recover what was lost, rebuild what

was destroyed, or find something completely new? Or is the “matière de l’absence” that Chamoiseau describes here an entirely different substance than the meaning created through a place? In either case, I suspect that the act of longing itself lies at the heart of it all.

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