

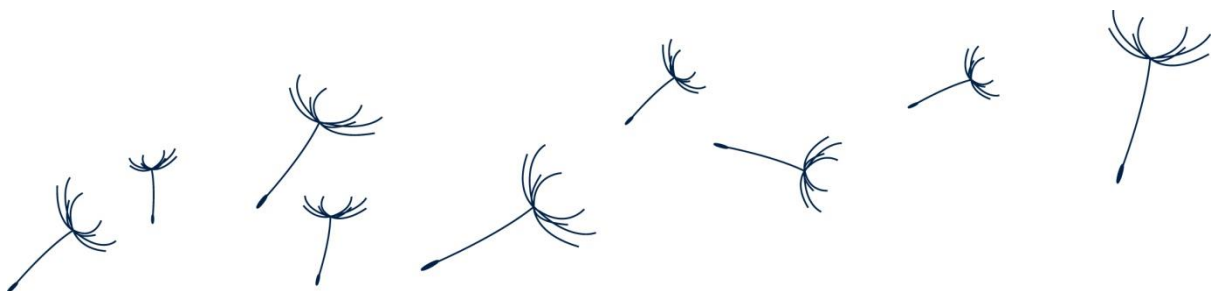


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Creolization on the Move in Francophone Caribbean Literature

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Abstract

In this paper I explore the particular use of dance and music observed in the writings of Maryse Condé, Ina Césaire, and Gerty Dambury. I examine how their use of orality, oral literature, and the body in movement create complex levels of textuality, meaning, and reading. I consider this process to reflect properties of Creolization and argue that the body performing in these texts remains the representation of a Creole microcosm in which exoticism is deconstructed to reveal politics of chaotic states of being. The body in movement presented in these Francophone literary texts uses Creole rhythms to do violence to lost memories (effects of deportation), neocolonial sufferings (effects of colonization), and paralyzing states that prevent the access to authentic liberation. By focusing on dance, music, *oralité*, the esthetic of *oraliture* and the *corps et graphie*/choreo-graphy, I analyze these polyphonic texts to reveal how these bodies of cultural productions rewrite and create their own history and historicity through inner and inter-zones of violence.

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1 Introduction (Topos and Contexts of *Départenance*)

In French Lesser *Antilles* societies, oral traditions inherited from Africa are salient practices deeply rooted in the ritualizing of experiences and subjectivities. These latter, participated in the *Antillais'* resistance in the face of colonization that involved conditions of loss of memory, troubled identity formations, as well as psychosomatic and physical traumas. Experienced histories and traumas were indeed embodied and performance was a means to dramatically recount the past in the present. Therefore, in addition to being historical, the performative recollection through storytelling, dance and music, entails the epistemological and the phenomenological.

Various writers from Guadeloupe and Martinique endeavored, on one hand, to fashion writing techniques that emulate oral and intangible cultural heritages that are testament to these African legacies that survived two centuries of colonization and displacement of Africans in the West Indies and on the other hand, they grasp new Creole creations that took life therein. These efforts remain idiosyncratic apparatuses to the writing of Maryse Condé, Ina Césaire and Gerty Dambury whose artistic productions go beyond aspects of mesolect (linguistic Creolization) to tackle the creative yet violent processes of Creolization that affect West Indians psychologically, culturally, economically, and socio-politically. Thus, through syntheses of immaterial traditions praxes, these women writers textually construct corporeality and embodied experiences that I consider utterly vital to a full comprehension of the transgressional agency, politics and aesthetics their texts hold.

I argue that by strategizing the (female) body within Creolization apparatuses, in-between recreation (the body in movement within oral traditions) and re-creation (of identity formation), these authors map paroxysmal displays of pain. This process generates a counter discourse to Western paradigms that tend to anchor representations of the body/island as exotic and ecstatic. I further explain that their embodied representations of Creolization generate cartographies of bodily pain and subversive agency that help de-commodify the body, create poetics of negation, and serve a productive purpose in terms of ethics and epistemology for they create alternative ways of imagining/imaging the body/island.

For two centuries, Guadeloupe and Martinique were colonies in which a forced encounter took place between Europeans and Africans. During this period, various elements from Europe and Africa were transported, forced and drawn together. As Robin Cohen states: “When Creolization occurs, participants select particular elements from incoming or inherited cultures, endow these with meanings different from those they possessed in the original cultures and then creatively merge these to create new varieties that supersede the prior forms” (2007:2). Hence, at the core of these connections, when looking at Creolization in the French Caribbean, we essentially navigate issues of deculturation, assimilation, and alienation; for these new products are often created out of conflict, adaptation, readjustment, or survival. In fact, Creolization involves complex rapports between inequality/hierarchy, domination/subalterneity, mastery/servitude, control and resistance.

The texts under study, *Pension les Alizés* (1988), *Mémoire d'îles*ⁱ (1985) and *Les rétifs* (2012)ⁱⁱ, comprise unique representations of (new) products of Creolization organized within paradigms of oral traditions that challenge border zones and taxonomic north/south constructions. To achieve this goal, Maryse Condé, Ina Césaire and Gerty Dambury use novel hybrid contexts in their texts' diegesis to epitomize the dystopia prevalent in their main characters' process of Creolization. Before analyzing the texts' representations of resurging effects of Creolization or the ways in which they challenge oralityⁱⁱⁱ conventions, it is important to first get a gist of their framework in terms of encounter (or contact zones) that are elaborated upon complex levels of hermeneutics featuring dance and music.

The diegesis of Ina Césaire's play *Mémoire d'îles* takes place during a ball during which two anonymous women, Maman N and Maman F, meet for the first time. While French Caribbean societies continue to bear racially stratified settings and exacerbated class discrepancies, Ina Césaire gradually

constructs a space of sharing in the text to reveal the closeness of the two women's dissimilar social classes (the struggling Negro woman as opposed to the privileged mulatto woman). Above all, the ball signifies a place/space of recreation (through dance and music) and re/creation of a single feminine body symbolizing the French Antillean locus as a unique domain (*corps-terrain*) of cultural amalgamation in which women are predominant. In Maryse Condé's play *Pension les Alizés*; a Haitian doctor named Ismaël finds refuge in the Parisian apartment of Emma Boigris, a former Pigalle exotic dancer of Guadeloupean origins. The dramaturge exposes the theme of Creolization through representations of their troubled identity, conditions of migration, and sense of loss in the city of Paris. Their encounter enables them to uncover post-plantationary defects that paralyze their liaison and exenterate their identity formation. The Haiti-Guadeloupe exogamy (Antillean Diaspora) is undermined while their hybrid bodies are inscribed through meticulous oral stylistics that will be examined in-depth in the following sections of study. In our final text of study *Les rétifs*, Gerty Dambury gives account of the massacre that occurred in the city of Pointe-à-Pitre in May 1967, when construction workers instigated a strike for a two francs pay increase and parity on social rights that led to military savagery when the French authorities gave the order to shoot at the protesters. The novel re-calls to light these painful historical events that have been obscured and disremembered as a result of destructions of evidence and documents classified under top-secret defense status until 2017.^{iv} The novel's structure and diegesis mimic a quadrille square dance, which is purposeful, given that it is one of the utmost evidences of Creolization in Guadeloupe. In fact, Black slaves Africanized this European dance^v that is irrefutably the essence of new creole creations and stylizations during the slave system of the time.^{vi}

These original settings of encounters filled with oral traditions sustain levels of tension that indicate psychological, physical and structural sufferings caused by Creolization and colonial fallouts. For what it means to be a French citizen from and in the margins constitutes one of the many struggles French Caribbean societies negotiate (Burton, 1994). Indeed, the complex dominant/dominated rapport between France and the French West-Indies continues to affect the *Antillais* faced with empirical patriarchal agencies policing their body as a subject of Motherland France (*La Mère-Patrie*). I therefore find it important to scrutinize the texts at the intersection of orality, corporeality, and cultural discourses and institutions, which informs my approach of considering a critical inter-relation between the represented scattered-localities and scattered-bodies found in the texts. Hence, the characters are positioned within conditions of *départenance* as their bodies in movement perform being part of, and separate from, France and/or the Creole crux of the island. In this manner, through issues of "forced" migration and exile, *Pension les Alizés* is a testament to the turmoil produced by *départenance* positioning and explores the Caribbean as homeland with characters experiencing feelings of "unhomeliness" (Hall, 2003:34) and longing to belong to this rejecting Caribbean homeland while living in France where their bodies are alienated. As the characters of our three texts do mimics of socio-cultural paradigms pertaining to these ambivalent "homes" (localities), their performances are proof of identities trapped in-between assimilation and alienation, resemblance and menace.

2 Creolization or Crossroads of Geographies, Languages, and Belongings

Our authors establish a unique Creole quintessence in their texts. In *Pension les Alizés*, while the characters meet in Paris, it is Guadeloupe and Haiti that constitute the setting of the play. We are consequently immersed in their *Antillean* contexts: « Massabielle » (14); « La plage de Labadie » (53); « le rhum de Marie-Galante [59] degrés » (16), « le Morne Miquel » (17), « les Tontons Macoutes » (53); « chabine dorée » (55); « zamba » (99). Nonetheless, the diegetic space goes beyond Guadeloupe and Haiti to present bodies that have been "in contact" (*en relation*) with the Americas. Thus, Ismaël portrayed as a polyglot versed in English, Spanish, Creole and French; much travelled, he has studied in Mexico and lived across North and Latin America. The copious enumerations of places give an account to a Creolization, a pan Americanism, an "elsewhere" rooted at the threshold of the characters' consciousness. Bordering cultures shape this linguistic transmutation, however, the plurality of locations

emphasize the characters' linkage to their "veritable" home, or else, their creole cultural, emotional, and ancestral central point of attachment which is observable in the following example:

ISMAËL. I didn't go back home [to Haiti] because I believed in the promises made by the Regime, but because I was sick of living far away... I was sick of speaking English or Spanish. I wanted to speak Creole, you hear me? So I went back to my homeland (54)

Creole words and neologisms that creolize French words are often utilized as if French alone could not offer full significance or occurrence. Consequently, Creole is embedded into French sentences without hindrance and *créolismes* infiltrate the discourse to enrich its hermeneutics. The *Antillean* space is also visible through manifold metaphors that pace the play: "The men bowed to me... like a sugar cane field" (13). Paying attention to linguistic paradigms pertinent to the French Caribbean, Maryse Condé qualifies the opposition between Creole and French to be a *passé* linguistic dichotomy. In fact, it is rather the linguistic transmutation shaped by bordering cultures that unbalances the argumentative basis of "the identity-root", which is claimed by authors of the *créolité* movement and anchored in their national framework. Local practices and confluences become global, and global confluences become local, similar to Glissant's view of Creolization as being a "relation", a process of "cultural and linguistic mixing", of "transculturation" that Mary Louise Pratt (1992) calls "contact zones" meaning that everything is permanently "translated."

Moreover, our texts remain at the crossroads of poetry, novel and drama through incorporations of songs, incarnations of spirits, myths, a temporality, storytelling, interjections, or proverbs that supplement the blurring of genres. Referring to Ina Césaire's play *Judith Graves Miller* recognizes that:

[As] an anthropologist as well as a playwright, [Ina Césaire] has researched extensively the importance of music and dance in Caribbean society [and] *Island Memories [Mémoire d'isles]* includes references to some fourteen songs and seven dances, ranging from Creole ballads to popular dance music, such as the sentimental *léwoz*. (Miller, 1995:50)

Akin to the Pan-American geography dimension of *Pension les Alizés*, *Mémoire d'isles* combines a multilingualism of theatrical writing that is affixed in-between tale, poetry, and novel genres. The courtyard illustrated in Dambury's *Les rétifs* is the locus of circles of *quadrille* performances (transfused with the performances of storytelling). A brief enumeration of chapters' titles illustrates the *quadrille* dance formations' vocabulary: "1ère figure pantalon", "2ème figure l'été", "3ème figure la poule", "4ème figure Pastourelle". Yvonne Daniel's ethnographic research on Caribbean *quadrilles* points that *quadrille* was a dance creolized by Africans and their descendants to assert "their human dignity":

Africans [...] replaced the African performance that was abhorred by Europeans with imitations, parodies, and creative extensions of the [European] colonial performances that they could observe. [...] across the Caribbean, African descendants perfected their versions of European body orientation, dance steps, and dance sequences, stating nonverbally that they, too, could dance socially esteemed dances. They took from the dominant group what the dominant group valued most: their elaborate dance practices. [...] African-descended performers signaled good manners and impressive social standing through a variety of *contredanse*-related performances. Over time, African descendants appropriated European *contredanse*-derived performance across the entire Caribbean region. (Daniel, 2010:216)

Dambury does not select the *gwo-ka*,^{vii} which comprises dancing and singing from African styles movement – solely, but rather the *quadrille* that is the crux of Creole creations^{viii} in Guadeloupe. As Daniel clarifies:

Most Caribbean *quadrilles* are European dances performed by African-descended performers according to European dance values, i.e., “Africanized European” dances or more properly European dance variations [...] this particular category, Caribbean *quadrilles*, does not routinely comprise “new” dance creations, which are generally recognized as veritable Creole dances: [...] Jamaica’s reggae; Trinidad’s calypso; Guadeloupe’s *gwoka*; or the French Caribbean’s *zouk*. The dance forms just named are neither African nor European, but new Caribbean creations or Creole dances; they are not variations. (Daniel, 2010:227)

It is therefore this variation that Dambury uses strategically to voice the bloody events of May 1967 involving the overpowering presence of the French authorities shooting at non-armed Guadeloupean workers, lawful “Children of Motherland France.” In addition, deceased Guadeloupean people (spirits) are made characters participating in the *quadrille* performance. The protagonists’ *parole* is also filled with linguistic stereotypy (metaphoric or stereotyped). These proverbs, sayings, and apothegms forms (*paremia*) are fixed forms that symbolically reinforce the characters’ affiliation to the cultural community of Guadeloupe. In *Pension les Alizés*, it is this stereotyped *parole* that gives account to the chain of ancestral memory, helping Emma and Ismaël to sustain closeness with the Caribbean space while being displaced in France. These forms of negotiations exemplify what Homi Bhabha calls non-binary oppositions, which reflect hybrid strategies that open new ways to negotiate cultural, meaning, “where power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal” (1996:58). Bhabha further explains that such negotiations make “possible the emergence of an “interstitial” agency that refuses the binary representation of social antagonism [and that these] hybrid agencies find their voice in a dialectic that does not seek cultural supremacy or sovereignty” (*ibid*).

In *quadrille*, the European violins and accordions usually carry the song line. Dambury respects the tradition by making each *parolier* an instrument and by preserving the *parolier*-lead (*je*) canon. But Dambury deviates progressively from these traditional *quadrille* rules as the characters recount historical truths. This is observed through speaking turns (*tours de parole*) that are no longer respected. Indeed, the *quadrille* seems to transpose itself onto a *gwo-ka* performance as the voices simultaneously ask to enter the circle to lead the rhythm, lead the dance, lead the chanting, lead history, and perform disobedience. Furthermore, while each “je” testimony performs, they each become the singularity of a collective space “Nous” (always capitalized in the novel) filled with dissident bearing (*voix/voies dissidentes*). I argue that the chaos of rhythm, the unmapping of rules, and the hybrid Creole space of encounter between the “other” and “Nous” prefigure the Antillean body/island/text as an occupied and rebellious space. They portend Bhabha’s theory on hybrid agencies, for they “deploy the partial culture from which they emerge to construct visions of community, and versions of historic memory, that give narrative form to the minority positions they occupy; the outside of the inside; the part in the whole” (*ibid*). The fiction becomes an authentic embodied historical con/text and experience, a body/text enclosed within national cultural praxes. The textual bodies in movement are represented within corporeality that captures the essence of an interstitial maroonage disclosing “the outside of the inside; the part in the whole.” As Jeannie Suk explains:

The present of postcoloniality can be formulated as a moment of going beyond through a return to the present. Interstitially can be understood as a temporal paradox in which looking to the future necessarily entails a return. The present, the past, and the future do not keep to their proper places, whether in the continuum or rupture, but haunt each other; making for what Bhabha calls “the unhomely condition of the modern world.” (Suk, 2001:62)

The maroonage in *Les rétifs* is articulated in-between the inside/outside (*l’en-dedans/l’en-dehors*), inside the coming-and-going (*aller-venir*). Gerty Dambury’s use of music and dance is a creative zone of passage to the “other” state, a process of Creolization.^{ix}

3 Creolization in the Feminine: Bending Conventional Codes of *Oralité* and *Oraliture*

Authors of the *Créolité* movement have long attempted to curve their texts' subject matters, contents, forms and contexts to what I call a *Créolité state* agenda (as opposed to a Creolization process) that centers on "homegrown" multicultural diversities exemplified textually through *oralité* and *oraliture* aesthetics. Creole in essence, *oralité* transmits the word within its cultural context, whereas *oraliture* (defined as oral literature) reveals memorial, collective, and traditional strategies. In the *Discours antillais*, Édouard Glissant emphasizes that:

Writing implies a lack of movement: the body does not accompany the flow of speech... Orality, on the contrary, is inseparable from the body in movement. What is said inscribes not only in the best position for its expression... but also in the almost semaphoric evolutions through which the body implies and supports speech. (Glissant, 1981:237-38)

Patrick Chamoiseau's writing displays such assembling of bodily performances, Creole storytelling, dance and music in order to create a text that becomes a Creole body/text branded as an "authentic" Martiniquan Creole rendering. The novels *Solibo Magnifique* (1988)^x and *Une Enfance Créole Tome I: Antan d'enfance*^{xi} (1996) typify Chamoiseau's *oraliture* aesthetic as he attempts to inscribe the Martiniquan *bèlè* dance and music, and also, as he attempts to write about the *ka* (drum) performance that would in turn become the orality of the *ka*. In *Solibo Magnifique*, through *choreo-graphy*, Chamoiseau also uses dashes to visually inscribe the presence of silent bodily stasis or embody the absence of voicing: "*The scene lasted that way _____ and could have lasted longer [...] Congo finally stood up _____ What is death?*" The musicality and the orality of the text are also sustained by abundant reiterations, alliterations and assonances. Chamoiseau defends that *oraliture* materializes the distance between the word and the writing. His endeavor is for the words to *be* and *do* as they are read. Solibo (main character and storyteller) expresses the essence of *oraliture* in the following passage:

Me, I say: you never write the words, but words you should have said. Writing is like getting the conch out of the ocean to say: here is the conch! The word answers: where is the ocean? But the essential is not there. I am leaving, but you are staying. I was speaking, but you are writing to announce that you are coming out of the word. You are giving me a hand across the distance. It's good, but you are touching the distance. (51)

Renée Larrier in "Configurations of Voice in Francophone Caribbean Narrative" examines the importance of the storyteller figure during the colonial era and its ramifications within the writing of French Caribbean authors. Correlating *cri/écriture* (shout/writing) and *conteur/écriture* (storyteller/writing) apparatuses, Larrier contends that the storyteller (*conteur*) uses a *parole* that conceals the camouflaged shout (*cri*) of "protests that surged among the many cries of pain and agony from the hold of the slave ships" (Larrier, 1995:276). She explains that in the plantation, the *conteur* functions as the holder of the collective memory and is a medium that transmits the collective *cri* as well as stories of survival and resistance to the slaves: "the *conteur's* heir is the *écrivain* who inscribes the collective Caribbean voice in order to counter the distortions and erasures of official history" (*ibid*) which are, according to Larrier traits found in the works of the *Créolité* movement writers as well as Édouard Glissant's literary productions. Indeed for Chamoiseau, the use of *oraliture* helps to bring the immediacy of the written speech (of orality) by presenting memorial (mnemonic), collective and traditional strategies relative to the French Caribbean. In the same fashion, he configures himself as a performer-storyteller-writer who inscribes *creoleness* on the page through the aesthetics of *oralité* and *oraliture*, what he calls

being a “marker of words” (*un marqueur de paroles*) (53). Marker comes from the creole expression “marking the drum”; when the drummer (*tambouyé*) marks the music through a sound that immediately mimics the steps of the dancer. It is important to note that in *gwo-ka* and *bèlè* circles, the dynamic between the lead-drummer (*makè*) and the dancer is quite revealing of the African griot tradition that is found in Guadeloupe and Martinique’s oral tradition^{xii} through the art of storytelling^{xiii}.

It is worth saying that the storyteller figure has long remained a male-gendered space (praised and theorized by the creolists, Édouard Glissant and the Négritude Movement writers), but in our selected texts, Ina Césaire, Maryse Condé, and Gerty Dambury reclaim this space to inscribe testimonies in the feminine. In *Les rétifs*, the (interstice created by the) improvised *quadrille* corresponds exactly to the storyteller/respondent interaction. Similarly, the *quadrille*’s musical polyrhythm puts in place in song form a call and response structure. Hence, the interplay is plural: it is textual, musical, and physical. Polyphony and polyvocality embody collective voices in the process of creating a new set of strategies, which expose and fight French neocolonial structures that subjugate Guadeloupeans and are silenced or distorted in official history. The improvisation (created, as I previously mentioned, through the disregard of traditional speaking turns and the cacophonous voicing) echoes the chaos of a constructing space of consciousness.

We also find orality methods of Antillean storytelling in *Pension les Alizés*. In fact, there is a sustained bind between the teller (*le raconteur*) and the respondent (*le répondeur*) to maintain the dialogue: “Do you hear me?” (55), “You believe me, right?” (65), “Right?” (13), “Tim Tim bois sèche! It’s the beginning of the tale. You forgot to start that way” (63), “Why won’t you start at the beginning?” (64). In addition, the dialogues are constructed on successions of interrogative structures that mock an initial phase of demonstration (*monstration*) as seen when Emma and Ismaël frequently enunciate *paroles-monstration* (which are steps) meant to elaborate or clarify a logical argument or equation:

Emma: Say it, that I AM a slut?

Ismaël : “A slut?”

Ismaël : “What’s a slut?” (23)

The respondent and teller exceedingly repeat/stress an important element of a sentence previously articulated in search of commonsensical balance, which also participates in the musicality and comedic potency in the text. Similar to Dambury’s use of polyphony, I consider these repetitions and reverberations to be *Paroles-mémoires* of fragmented bodies. Other aspects of reiterations are found in *Pension les Alizés*; we can mention for instance the needle that Emma resets when the vinyl stops spinning on the record player which mimics her own voicing (*parole*) going back to itself. In fact, she restates relentlessly her remarks like a return on her/self – while always looking back into her past: “I was a beautiful Negress... I was a beautiful Negress” (12), “[Emma is] shaming our name! Shaming our name!” (13), “I was born in Marie-Galante. In the town of Treille. Yes that’s where I was born, in Marie-Galante... Yes I was born in Marie-Galante, in the town of Treille” (14). Through the repetition of speech, Maryse Condé provides the performing body with agents of resistance. The iteration mirrors Emma’s hybridity and bodily violence while simultaneously “marking” (fixing) her bodily pain to give it presence and remembrance. As Édouard Glissant reminds us:

The Creole stories of the Antilles [...] question the Creation myth or throw it into turmoil [...] The idea of the tale is to challenge the sacred and absolute nature of any Genesis. At the very least, the sacred and the absolute are not linked to a mythic beginning. The word cannot pretend not to know that at the birth of the Antillean or Caribbean people there was no Genesis, but a historical fact established over and over again and erased over and over again from public memory: Slavery. The holocaust of the slave trade and the belly of the slave ship [...] confer a much more imperative Genesis, even if the origin proceeds

from a point that is hybrid. [...] This new type of “origin,” which is not about the creation of a world, I will call a “digenesis. (Glissant, 2000:194-195)

Therefore, the reiteration operates what I call a process of corpomemorial tracing (which maintains an atavistic function) and the cyclical performance voices the invisible pain located inside Emma’s body, which she constantly negotiates in relation to the “other” desired, missed, and blurred point of origin. This point of analysis corroborates with the mnemonic characteristics of *oraliture* for it emulates Emma’s lingering efforts to recall home (Guadeloupe). In effect, it is through repetition that Emma tries to repossess (female) agency. Therefore, from a phenomenological viewpoint, the body becomes or comes to be by the power that is vested into it by speech and its repetition.

Most importantly, I consider *Pension les Alizés* to be the anti-mimicry of traditional Creole storytelling conventions. It is composed of *oraliture*, but does “as if”. For instance, the text presents new forms of orality blending modern and traditional tales. It is best illustrated in the scene during which Ismaël revisits his childhood and tells the story of the “glazed red apple-France” that he steals and munches “crac” and that contains in its center a “black worm” (27). In this scene, like many others in the play, the respondent does not really respond to the teller, nor does the teller care about the respondent. Often they simply do not understand or listen to each other: “What are you telling me? No, you can’t understand” (30), “No, you don’t know a thing! Nothing at all!” (40). The characters repeat their words but cannot understand each other. The repetitive structures peculiar to orality are distorted in Condé’s play. The speech is scattered and the redundant words do not facilitate any possible comprehension. The words eviscerate. The binary discursive structure reinforces the distance between the characters. The classical forms of teller-respondent found in oral traditions are overtaken by acculturation and hybridization that parallel the characters’ conflictual zones of contact.

4 Creolization or the Unremitting Maroonage

Temporality visible in our texts of study indicates what Édouard Glissant analyzes as a discontinuity of History for the West Indian caused by a slavery era that engendered a “discontinuity in the continuous, a non-history” (Glissant, 2000:131). In our texts, temporality is organized on the triptych memory-space-trauma, and discontinuity within the amalgamation of past, present, and future as well as the maroonage of the living and deceased (spirits) that pervade the voice and physical space of the main protagonists. In *Pension les Alizés* Emma remembers significant dates in connection with natural disasters; for instance 1952 tallies with bad wintry weather (48). In *Mémoires d’Isles*, the protagonists continuously link memories to major historical or socio-cultural events (1928, the year of the hurricane). Evocations of dance also follow similar patterns (the memory of a communion, of falling in love). Discontinuity of history is reached through overemphasis of feelings of nostalgia and rhythmic dissonances that mirror the amplitude of the mothers’ displacement. The maroonage of the mother’s mind is quite significant. Dance and music are “present” in both spaces of representation: the physical/corporeal space of the ball where the two mothers sit, and the mental space of their memories. Placed in-between these two spaces, the mothers relentlessly recall their love for the mazurkas, *biguines*, and waltzes danced at balls of yesteryear. Dance and music are seen in subjective terms (from memory), not in the immediacy of the ball where they, the women, are present. This quasi-immobility creates an uneasiness that is reinforced at the end of the play by the announcement of the presence of children that the two women are accompanying and waiting on. Maman N and Maman F ostracize and veil the physical space of the dance of the youngsters through the maroonage of their recollections. We first notice an acceleration of rhythms mimetically represented by the many enumerations of souvenirs, then is seen a deceleration of the dance rhythms they evoke and finally, a depletion of thoughts echoed by the end of the ball they are attending. This meticulous use of rhythm reinforces the theme of exhaustion as asthenia (lack of energy) and adynamia (loss of strength) that are forms of debility calling for representations of old age (and death). The end of both the physical and mental balls is a fall and a dénouement for the body that is in a conflictual zone of in-betweenness, displaced in its current historiography, and therefore reverting back to memories.

The main protagonist of Gerty Dambury's novel is a schoolgirl Emilienne, who lingers in the courtyard of her Pointe-à-Pitre house as she expects the return of her father who has not been home for a few days. The text is organized in a three-dimensional space; headmost, the private space of Emilienne's house, then the public space represented by descriptions of the urban city of Pointe-à-Pitre, Emilienne's school, and La Place de la Victoire (where the conflicts and killings occur). These public and private spaces revolve on the courtyard of Emilienne's house which functions as a central paradigm of the three-dimensional structure that it completes.^{xiv} Haunted by wandering of souls, the courtyard is the lieu of the collective. The spirits are characters; they are given the authority to lead the "movements" that will unfold the truth. They are materialized into physical entities performing a *quadrille* dance. The narrator then deepens the dead's' amorphous nature, their voices becoming instruments (violin, *chacha*, *siyak*, *tambour d'bas*...) or personifying the *quadrille* dance itself. Testimonies from the living and the dead are ubiquitous and create a unique collective voice mimicking the behemoth mystery that surrounds the tragic events of 1967. Most importantly, this collective voice reflects their being together, without homogenizing their individual stories (Nancy, 1986:225). The multi-vocal story becomes ambiguous, similar to the improvised chanting and dancing that pace the text. Indicating Glissant's theory of discontinuity of History, Dambury's atemporal framework reveals correspondingly, the depth of the loss of memory from locals (despite their gender, class, or age).

I consider that these Afra-writings create atemporal structure through a blending of material and immaterial worlds that help both actualizing a cosmogonical setting and creating a point of origin that Édouard Glissant calls a "digenesis" (*digenèse*) (cit). The atemporal chanting creates cosmic cycles, the writing becomes a chain of initiation, and the texts a *terrain*, locus of secrets that is given as a public testament to the value and tenacity of Caribbean peoples across time and history. This spatio-temporal discontinuity allows a deconstruction of past events that have been neglected by the mainstream or surmised by historians, just as it generates authenticity to the piecing of voices that were displaced in history. These *paroles* are now sealed inside the texts that participate in the construction of the visibility of non-canonical heroes. As Homi Bhabha states:

We have entered an anxious age of identity, in which the attempt to memorialize lost time, and to reclaim lost territories, creates a culture of disparate "interest groups" or social movements. [...] The importance of such retroaction lies in its ability to reinscribe the past, reactivate it, relocate it, resignify it. More significant, it commits our understanding of the past, and our reinterpretation of the future, to an ethics of "survival" that allows us to work through the present. And such a working through, or working out, frees us from the determinism of historical inevitability repetition without a difference. (Bhabha, 1996:59-60)

Dambury finds the term "rétifs" (restive) to be very representative and explains that the term "restive", used to describe a horse that refuses to move forward, is testament to the animality seen during slavery. In her novel, structural violence is not subject but object; pain is not inflated, the restive people are placed right at the center of the circle, they are the core of the transcultural space of the *quadrille*, they are non-homogeneous people creating new forms of resistance. The depicted 1967 island of Guadeloupe is a hybrid place caught between tradition and modernization, trounced by France's brutal *képis rouges* military force. We observe the difficult position of the subaltern between alienation and affiliation, the notion of *départenance*: not/wanting to belong, to affiliate with the representation of power. To paraphrase Bhabha they evolve a *third space* that remains a space of differentiation (1990:207). The body in pain is thus textualized as a (de) constructed zone, a zone of passage between death and life; a zone of (re) birth:

Identity is never an a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality ... the image ... marks the site of an ambivalence ... its representation is always spatially split-it makes present something that is absent -and temporally deferred: it is the representation of a time that is always elsewhere, a repetition. (Bhabha, 1990:51)

This process reveals the suffering body as a rhizome. The third space is in fact a rhizomatic space in which the body in pain seeks identity. It is through the pain, the utterance of violence that the contact between “moi” and the “other” is possible. Therefore, the suffering body is more than a zone of passage; it is most importantly a zone of contact. The origin root of the rhizomatic suffering body is itself a process similar to Sankofa and conditions the in-between characteristic of the body. The in-between is a point of origin. Consequently, the body in pain (re)presents and (con)textualizes rhizomatic strategies and procedures within the end and the beginning (which is the characteristic of the origin). As Daniel Sibony implies, there is more than one origin in a same origin, and identity is a state of shared origin (1990:19). The voicing of the rebellious-rhizomatic body becomes a transgressional (con)text. Similarly Ina Césaire inverts all possible representations of Martinique as exotic and fantastic. First, she rescinds the notions of the charming *doudou kréyol* and pillar-women (*fanm poto-mitan*). The *doudou* was a frequent character in the repertoire of French imperial mythology. The archetypal colonial *doudou* represents a black or métisse Creole woman who loves a white French man. In music, she only speaks with melancholia of her impossible relationship with the white man. The term *doudou* is largely used in the French Antilles as a term of endearment “Sweetheart” (*Chéri/e*). The *doudou creole*’s imagery stands as a construction that entails patriarchal economies of desires. Thus, Ina Césaire destroys such imageries by making obvious the complexities of Martiniquan women. Indeed, the pillar-woman is exhausted, she dreams of the past and struggles to relate to the youth. Thenceforward, Ina Césaire exposes a troubling concern: the *fanm poto-mitan* is a man-less woman. Men are actually completely absent from the play, even in their recollection of waltzes or mazurkas, the mothers do not give presence to any men. Men are nonexistent.

Through memorial and traditional strategies, the esthetic of the *oraliture* is a *littérature-terroir* (homeland-literature); the text becomes body, territory (*corps-terrain*) and participates in an anthropologic enterprise that authenticates the immediacy and discontinuities of “relations” affecting Antillean societies from *within* and *without*. The inscription of the female storytellers (*les femmes-conteurs*) defies the phallogocentric storyteller discourse and theories presented within the *Créolité*, the *Antillanité* and the *Négritude* movements. Maryse Condé, Ina Césaire, and Gerty Dambury’s texts “do” resistance as they incorporate the voices of the silenced – such as women, prostitutes, and homosexuals – to a historiography that tends to be exclusively masculine and heteronormative. Likewise, during their performance of traditional tales Emma and Ismaël are constructing modern tales filled with elements challenging representations and constructions of Caribbean characters as heroes. Accordingly, Emma is a “whore”, pimped by countless rich men that provide her (as Ismaël remarks): “une vie de château quoi!” (64). The corpomemorial tracing operates within the plurality of sexes, genders, classes, races, and localities and mirrors the continuous negotiations of the body within the process of Creolization.

5 Conclusion

In *Pension les Alizés*, *Mémoire d’isles* and *Les rétifs*, the space in which the body performs is a social spectacle in which dance and music open a dialogue between the self and the *other* that reveals social discrepancies and taboos in Franco-Creolophone societies negotiating their tradition and modernity. *Oralité*, *oraliture* and paradigms of immaterial cultural heritages are essentialized within an embodied writing that attempts a (re)creation of the body and a voicing of the unspeakable. It re-transcribes the repressed, the censored, and the imprisonment of the body within this in-between space that defines it. Shortening the distance between *dire* (saying) and *vouloir dire* (the intentions-meanings in the will to say) authorizes the creation of a narrative interstice in which dichotomist systems such as private/public or individual/community disappear under inconsistencies and contradictions where the dissemination of the female body occurs (Derrida 1972). But this body is more than a space of traces of trauma, traces of sufferings; it also elaborates its own mappings of orality and resistance found in the language and the proverbs that immortalize the Antillean space into the memory and History.

The renowned Guadeloupean dancer and choreographer Lénablou compares this fragmentary state of being to the *bigidi* steps style found at the core of *gwo-ka* dance, with the dancers continuously pretending imbalance to the point of falling, without ever falling. The analogy of *bigidi* being a symbol of a *ka-ribbean* state of mind is quite interesting. Indeed, the body dancing the pain and joy of life feints disequilibrium, but to “pretend” disequilibrium reveals in the body a powerful equilibrium stimulated by desires of survival, hope, and freedom. Orality, dance, and music in our selected texts are the liminal spaces of Creolization illustrating the body negotiating the double bind of dispossessed origins and becoming other. The reading of these transgressive bodies re-conceptualizes spectatorship for it nourishes an existential burden for the readers who are faced with the possible insufficiency of their own politics.

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7 Notes

i English Translation: *Island Memories*

ii English Translation: *A Restive People*

iii Orality is the oral characteristic of language, of the discourse, of a culture. See also Lilyan Kesteloot (1993), Ndiaye (1996), Relouzat (1998)

iv The dossier containing documents related to the tragic riots of May 67 (or *Mé 67* in Creole) has been classified *top-secret defence* until 2017. Destructions of municipal archives and hospitalization records have also contributed to the distorting count of victims (between 8 and 200). As a result, seeking justice from the French government has been extremely difficult for families of victims

v Consult Daniel 2010, p. 227

vi Consult Cyrille, Dominique "Sa Ki Ta Nou (This belongs to us)"

vii *Ka* is a major part of Guadeloupe's culture. The term refers to hand drums, the music created with them, and the dances they accompany. There are seven major rhythms in *gwo-ka* played with two types of drums; the larger, the *boula*, plays the central rhythm and the smaller, the *makè*, is used by the drummer to embellish the *boula* rhythm through interplays with the dancer or the singer

viii Consult Cyrille 2002

ix Consult Francis, Gladys M. "Transgressive Embodied Writings of KAribbean Bodies in Pain" (2015)

x English Translation: *Solibo Magnificent* (by Réjouis & Vinokur 1997)

xi English Translation: *Childhood*

xii Consult Francis, Gladys M. "Fonctions et enjeux de la danse et de la musique dans le texte francophone créole" 2011

xiii See the works of Roselaine Bicep on creole and storytelling

xiv Consult Francis, Gladys M. and Palermo. "Tyrannie en 'France': André Breton et Gerty Dambury" in *French Literature Beyond Borders* 2015