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Framing Difference: Migration and Creolization in the French Caribbean

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Abstract: Both forced and voluntary migrations have marked the Caribbean region since the 17th Century. The result has been an amalgam of ethnicities and cultures that continually transform each other, and a growing group of Caribbean diasporic communities that differentiate themselves both from their host population, and increasingly from the core Caribbean identity that attaches to their place of origin. Considering the Caribbean and its diaspora together compels us to revise long-held notions of the role and place of "center" and "periphery" in a post/colonial cultural fusion interrogating and displacing rigid assumptions of identity through the prisms of an ever-evolving modernity, and an incessant cycle of migrant movement.

Keywords: Caribbean diaspora – *antillanité* – creolization – Pascal Légitimus – *Antilles-sur-Seine* – metropolitan – *intégrisme*

Any examination of migration and creolization in the Caribbean should perhaps begin by examining the history of population transfer, of migration, *métissage*, and cultural exchange that emerged in the wake of the Columbian watershed. For in fact, the year 1492 has, over time, been socioculturally inscribed as engendering not only the beginnings of Western modernity, but, more specifically, the architectonic shift that literally gave rise to a Caribbean history that was perceptible and transmissible, and therefore real in scriptive terms. However, what inheres in traditional readings of this date are those implications of origin, linearity and hierarchy that tend to split off the presumably "ahistorical" period before 1492 from Columbus's encounter with a world new only to him and those that followed him, not to those who were already there, and whose numbers were about to be radically decimated.

But perhaps the true significance of Columbus's arrival in the "New World" lies not in this act of "discovery," but in the ethnic and cultural synthesis that was produced in its wake for the five centuries that followed, a point that the editors of the volume *Seeds of Change* make well, "What Columbus had really discovered was, however, another old world, one long populated by numerous and diverse peoples with cultures as distinct, vibrant, and worthy as any to be found in Europe. Tragically, neither Columbus nor those who followed him recognized this truth . . . Only recently, in fact, have we come to realize that what Columbus did in 1492 was to link two old worlds, thereby creating one new world" (12). I would like to suggest, then, that if we seek to locate an originary cultural axis that is the corollary of the Columbian debacle, then we can do no better than to focus on the complex patterns of migration, multiplicity and exchange that lie at the core of any identitarian framework seeking to define the peoples of the Caribbean.

Thinking the Caribbean, whether in historical, geographic, cultural, or literary terms, must then come to terms with the fact of the Caribbean as a settler and immigrant society, one where the indigenous population was all but eradicated, and any return to the original homelands of the settlers in the modern era is marked by the argument that the region, as Stuart Hall argues in "Negotiating Caribbean Identities," is now "twice diasporized." Indeed, the Caribbean has long become the *de facto* homeland for all of its arrivant groups, as Hall has pointed out in a well-known passage from his iconic essay, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," "None of the people who now occupy the islands – black, brown, white, African, European, American, Spanish, French, East Indian, Chinese, Portuguese, Jew, Dutch – originally 'belonged' there. It is the space where the creolisations and assimilations and syncretisms were negotiated. The New World is the third term – the primal scene – where the fateful/fatal encounter was staged between Africa and the West" (400-01). As a result, diaspora as both a concept and a practice arguably lies at the heart of Caribbean communities both at home and abroad, as Hall continues, "The diaspora experience . . . is defined not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity . . . Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" ("Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 235). Ultimately, this first iteration of diaspora is given specificity in the Caribbean context by its complex history of ethnographic exchange that includes the inception of slavery, the contractual indentureship of Indian and Chinese labor that followed emancipation, and the arrival of Portuguese and Syro-Lebanese groups around the end of the nineteenth century. All this was accompanied by the integration of British, French, Spanish, and Dutch cultures that are the ineradicable trace of the colonial period. The arrival of independence accompanied by labor-driven mass movements – both between various islands and to various metropoles – that are the hallmark of late twentieth-century demographics in the region frame its second iteration of diaspora.

If we take a closer look at the initial wave of Caribbean migration, it has been estimated that of the fifteen million or more slaves transported across the Atlantic, while only about 4% went to North America, about 40% went to the Caribbean, with about the same number going to Brazil. These figures also underline the pivotal importance of empire and differential hierarchies of trade to contemporary colonizing powers in the Caribbean, and to France in particular. During this period, it should be noted that France's Caribbean holdings, including Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Haiti, accounted for two-fifths of France's foreign trade; indeed, Haiti was the most valuable colony in the world by the 1780s, its sugar production by a slave population numbering between five and six hundred thousand accounting for as much as 60% of France's GDP. Its economic and symbolic value as a colonial possession – as the jewel in the colonial crown, so to speak – is also borne out by Napoleon's failed revisionist military attempts – backed by 22,000 soldiers – to reintroduce slavery there at the peak of the Haitian Revolution in 1802. Guadeloupe and Martinique, however, would continue under the French aegis.

The introduction of over four million African slaves into the Caribbean plantation system constituted the first migration, then, and as we shall see, this diverse ethnocultural group was also at the core of a Caribbean creolization that arguably wrought insistent and ineradicable changes in the ethnic and cultural structure of the region.[1] The plantation thus became the crucible of Caribbean language formation, the result of plantation slave labor drawn from hundreds of ethnic groups speaking as many languages, and forced interaction between master and slave. Overall, the social exigencies wrought by slavery would engender creolized Caribbean patterns of sociocultural transformation, particularly in the areas of language, culture and folklore, and musical expression.

It is in the interstices of these sites of doubling and transformation that the initial traces of Caribbean creolization were produced, appropriating pluralisms beyond its African and its European axes in a hybrid gesture that ultimately joined with a variety of influences to shape a grammar of critical cultural difference in and for the region. Chief among these certainly would have been the wholesale importation of a replacement labor force into the region from the Indian subcontinent for several decades following emancipation – an event occurring in 1834 for the British Caribbean and in 1848 for their French counterparts – creating a sustained demographic and cultural shift that arguably made up the second wave of Caribbean migration. These Indian, Chinese, and Lebanese communities continued arriving in massive numbers through the second decade of the twentieth century, such that people of South Asian descent now make up over 45% of the population of Trinidad, 55% of the population of Guyana, and over 30% of the population of Guadeloupe.[2] These populations would have brought with them their languages, cultural patterns, and religious practices, all of which slowly would have been mutually transformed even as they were integrated into the larger cultural whole, thus transforming in their turn the shape, substance and expression of Caribbean identity.

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[1] See Richardson, 63-5.

[2] For an excellent overview of subcontinental immigration into the region and its several effects and implications, see Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad 1783-1962*, particularly Ch. 6, "The Newcomers 1838-1917."

By now it should be clear that this process of cross-cultural contact and transformation forms, at bottom, the framework for positing the Caribbean as a whole as a Creole society, the complex product of waves of migrant movement and ethnic and cultural interaction over time. As a result, the ways in which we have viewed the Caribbean as a postcolonial society – as one dominated by *either* European *or* African sociocultural traces – must be fundamentally transformed. Indeed, the twin forces of migration and creolization that are arguably at the center of contemporary Caribbean culture rewrites long-held notions of Caribbean identity.

The principle of identity and its articulation has attached itself to a number of literary and cultural movements in recent years. In the French Caribbean, the appearance of *antillanité* in 1981 was followed in 1989 by *créolité*, an attempt to theorize the experience of creolization in the Caribbean into a framework for cultural expression. On the surface, creolization would appear to share etymological and cultural links with *criollo* and *mestizaje* in Spanish, and with *métissage* in French. However, while each of these categories responds to the pluralisms arising out of the colonial encounter, they also reflect specific differences within the colonial experience that tend to focus on a conjoining of cultures, rather than the process of transformation of already existing cultural patterns and artifacts into a new, third term that is implicit in creolization. Clearly, then, the term *creolization* cannot be fully understood without taking into account its historical background and geographical context. In these terms, creolization must be seen not simply as a synonym for, say, hybridity, but as a phenomenon of ethnocultural interaction and transformation that is indispensable to understanding pressing pluralities of the New World experience, both within and beyond the Caribbean itself.

From a more political perspective, there is a plethora of evidence, much of it historical and cultural as well as anecdotal, to suggest that Caribbean people view themselves as originating in and belonging to separate and distinct national entities. While this is largely the legacy of the colonial encounter, it does raise the question of the extent to which the region's compound, contested patterns of cultural identity converge with "diaspora" to map the boundaries of contemporary Caribbean identity.

This diasporic doubleness that contextualizes the Caribbean, then, is critically bound up with are related issues of migration and return. Both of these phenomena, while certainly not peculiar to the Caribbean experience, play a key role in determining the extent to which, and the ways in which, the Caribbean may be defined as a diasporic community. If the right – the dream – of return grounds most conceptions of the diasporic experience, and is itself bound up both with problems of place or location driven by tensions of belonging, then the resulting patterns of ethnic and geocultural dispersal are read as driving the concept of diaspora in the first place. Furthermore, such patterns presuppose a somewhat uniform sense of co-ethnicity and exile among the dispersed, as well as what Braziel and Mannur, in their introduction to their essay collection *Theorizing Diaspora*, term “clearly demarcated parameters of geography, national identity, and belonging” (1). Along these lines, Robin Cohen also identifies a number of critical criteria grounding the mass displacements that traditionally compel diasporas into migration or flight. These include all or some of the following: dispersal from an original homeland; the framing and idealization of this homeland in collective memory or myth; a hope or expectation of return; a strong, ethnically-grounded group identity; a problematic inscription in the host country or community; and a sense of transnational solidarity with co-ethnic groups in other countries.[3] However, as a result of the many and varied movements of peoples that have characterized the twentieth century, the shape and tenor of diaspora itself has undergone numerous metamorphoses, leading Braziel and Mannur to “caution . . . against the uncritical, unreflexive application of the term ‘diaspora’ to any and all contexts of global displacement and movement” (3). But at least three key questions arise from the preceding structural *schémas*: firstly, how many of these criteria can be seen to apply directly to the Caribbean condition? Secondly, if the category of diaspora is itself linked to concepts of nation and national identity, how important is the national and geographic fragmentation of the Caribbean region in the characterization of its people as a diaspora? And finally, to what extent must we refine our presumptive conjunction of the Caribbean as diasporic community to account for chronological gaps, paradoxes, and temporal and cultural anomalies? Certainly the history of the Caribbean and its people does not conform to traditional diasporic patterns and exigencies of exile, dispersal, and return. Nor, for that matter, do we discern a single national entity of overwhelming political and psychological importance looming large on the diasporic horizon, a place that mediates both origin and return. It is clear, however, that any inscription of the Caribbean as diasporic community implies recognizing the role of a plural ethnocultural presence within the region, which in its turn mediates the very “Caribbeanness” of those groups who have migrated to major metropolitan centers since the end of World War II.

So what I want to argue here is that the central principle that traditionally grounds diaspora, that of an identifiable, albeit distant, originary national entity cedes, in the Caribbean case, to a transnational and transcultural inscription of identity, grounded in communities and locations eventuated in history and expanding and protean in the present. Much of the twentieth century is marked by several migratory moments of varying scale, and it is on the final one that I wish to concentrate for the rest of this paper. For reasons of time I will simply mention a few examples here; a substantial number of West Indians – principally Jamaicans – went to Panama in the early part of the century to work on the construction of the Canal, while many Leeward Islanders went to the US Virgin Islands in the 1960s mainly for economic reasons, in the main higher wages than they could earn at home, and in US dollars to boot. It should also be noted that a large number – principally Antiguans this time – also went to the Dominican Republic in the 1930s and 1940s to work on the sugar plantations. This last event would decades later have unexpected, unprecedented and radically transformative consequences on the demographic and cultural identity of Antigua through the phenomenon of return migration. Certainly, then, while the geographically and politically fragmented Caribbean is not in this sense a "motherland," it is nevertheless incontrovertible that the region as a whole figures as "home" for those who are "away."

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[3] See Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* for a fuller discussion of the general basis and implications of these categories.

My most recent work concentrates on the cultural and demographic phenomenon of Caribbean postwar migration that took thousands of West Indians to the former colonial capitals of Paris and London between 1948 and 1998, and the ways in which these new inhabitants and their descendants came to represent their simultaneously separate but parallel experiences in literature and film. Indeed, there are now more than half a million persons in each of these cities claiming West Indian birth or background, and most recent national census figures estimate Caribbean communities to be virtually 1% of the population in both cases. What is of equal interest here is that many second- and third-generation immigrants to these capitals define themselves as West Indian (more specifically, say, Guadeloupean, Martinican, Antiguan, or Jamaican), despite of their metropolitan place of birth; largely speaking, these identificatory strategies tend to function as markers of lack of integration into or identification with the nation and its social whole. For the purposes of this lecture, though, I would like to concentrate specifically on the situation of the Antillean citizens of the DOM (*départements d'outre-mer*), or French overseas departments, citizens of France by law but subject to otherness and exclusion stemming from their ethnic difference from the mainland majority. The experience of these geographic and cultural migrants highlights the *décalage* between modern-day France's vaunted universalist claims and its quotidian realities of racial stereotyping and exclusion of its 'others,' patterns that arguably find their roots in the turn to the center and in earlier racial hierarchies that served to ground French colonialism and the *mission civilisatrice*.

While migration toward the metropole was put in motion with the advent of labor shortages around World War I, it was later catalyzed in the first instance by the advent of the departmentalization law in 1946, whose integrationist policies made full citizens of all the inhabitants of the *quatre vieilles colonies*, and in the second by the resulting right of unimpeded access to the metropole which ultimately led to the establishment of BUMIDOM, or the *Bureau pour le développement des migrations dans les départements d'outre-me*r, whose goal was to furnish a state-organized and -controlled labor pool. The results of these migratory moments were both transgressive and transformative. While postwar immigration into France was largely driven by massive labor shortages, as it was in most of the rest of Europe, the paradox of the DOMs is that their populations were not foreigners seeking entry, but nationals moving from the periphery to the center of the nation-state. Specifically for the DOMS, however, between its inauguration in April 1963 and its dissolution eighteen years later, BUMIDOM funneled over 160,000 workers from Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, and Réunion onto the French mainland, many of whom were trying to escape rising unemployment in the French periphery. For example, a 1982 comparison between France and its Caribbean DOMs shows that while metropolitan French unemployment stood at 8.4%, in the Caribbean the rate stood at 12.8%. Largely through BUMIDOM's efforts, over 150,000 French West Indians were resident in France by 1970, having largely arrived within the space of a single decade. By the time this organization's work came to an end in 1982, one person in four born in the West Indies was living in France; by 1990, the total number of people in France claiming West Indian descent had risen to a remarkable 400,000, of whom 2/3 were born on the Caribbean and 1/3 on the mainland. With this metropolitan Caribbean population now approaching the figure of three-quarters of a million, it is already more than 1% of the total French population, and its influence is transforming the landscape of French cultural identity in a myriad of ways.

This nascent community faced a number of challenges, not least among them the adjustment to being a minority group. As part and parcel of this process, the experience of many *antillais* confirmed Edouard Glissant's dictum that it is in metropolitan France that many Antilleans confront their *antillanité* for the first time. Here, the symbolic oscillation between belonging and otherness steadily undermines France's cultural paradigm of assimilation and its corollary of conformity, "Assimilation has been promised to immigrants," as David Beriss writes, "at the price of abandoning public attachment to their cultures of origin" (xviii). Ironically, however, it will be their cultural and linguistic specificity that these Caribbean departmental migrants will use to assert their cultural distinctiveness, construct Caribbean community groups on the mainland, and lambaste the limitations of the French ideal of assimilation, as Beriss continues, "As French citizens, Antilleans are cultural insiders, but as dark-skinned postcolonials, they are visibly marked as outsiders" (xviii). Indeed, the version, and the vision, of Glissant's *antillanité* that emerges here in response to metropolitan challenges of acceptance and integration is unique in a number of ways, as David Beriss writes, "In France, however, they were challenged to invent an Antillean identity that had never existed in the islands . . . to be recognized as culturally distinct, Antilleans used art, social policy, and religion to shape their identity in ways recognizably French in form but Caribbean in substance" (21). This act of contestation highlights one of the key paradoxes of this French Caribbean nexus of departmentalism and citizenship, which is their subjection to an ironic and reductionist pattern of stereotyping based on race, in which many Antilleans are often assumed to be part of an amorphous group of "others" for whom location in the metropole is legally questionable and assimilation into Frenchness is deemed to be largely impossible. In a sense, then, their diasporic assertion of their cultural distinctiveness and difference is an insistence on the validity of cultural pluralism for France and its varied subjects, a position at odds with the French principle of *intégrisme*. In other words, it is the active contestation of this outsider status that lies at the core of diasporic acts of cultural self-assertion, and speaks directly to the number of activist cultural associations that now dot the Franco-Antillean metropolitan landscape.

I would like to spend the remainder of this lecture examining some of the ways in which key issues of migration, cultural identity and difference play out in a 2000 French film entitled *Antilles-sur-Seine*, directed by Pascal Légitimus. Through the film's characters and the actions that drive the plot, the city itself is inscribed through "new axes of belonging and exclusion," as Dawn Fulton puts it, traced by "cultural outsider[s] who fundamentally chang[e] the fabric of the metropolis through the crosscultural exchange his or her inscription in urban daily life embodies" (245). Indeed, these cultural outsiders arguably center the narrative: its engine is a loosely-knit network of Parisian Antilleans whose combined efforts help rescue the kidnapped wife of the mayor of the commune of Marie-Galante. As their actions prove more effective than those of the police, they come to represent "both the presence and the dialogical engagement of the exogenous city dweller in the construction of a transnational metropolitanism" (245), as Fulton continues. It is this very exogamy, in a key sense, one predicated on the conjunction of exile, difference, and community, that provides the enabling matrix for the characters, setting and plot of *Antilles-sur-Seine*.

In sum, then, this film is positioned where French principles of universalism, community, identity, and difference intersect, bringing to the forefront of the French cinematic imagination those oppositional issues of marginalization and exclusion that have fractured the myth of the singular, integrationist ethic on which contemporary France prides itself. While the plot centers on *dom-tomien* life in the *banlieue*, highlighting the experiences of a particular segment of the metropolitan population, its focus is on the paradoxical cohesion of this racialized underclass. The film's opening gambit, so to speak, is put into place from the opening credits, in a set of brief sequences that appear, at first sight, to be grounded in and to reinforce the standard – if not the worst – stereotypes of a carefree, tropical Caribbean lifestyle. A brief set of pre-film extra-diegetic scenes are peopled with palm trees, beaches, and smiling locals, while the approaching feature is announced as "un film qui va vous tropicaliser" (*Antilles-sur-Seine*). While such a framework seemingly "works to confirm Western stereotypes about the Caribbean, depicting it as slow-paced and unchanging" (51), and forcing it "to emphasise an exoticised Caribbean setting" to such an extent that it becomes "a film steeped in cliché and stereotype," as Sam Haigh argues (50), I would like to propose an alternative interpretation, one that in fact plays on the structure and function of the stereotype itself, subverting and inverting it such that prior notions of otherness are dislodged from their original enabling matrix and reinscribed as a series of self-reflexive, parodic identitarian assertions that interrogate and dismantle their stereotypic avatars. What Légitimus accomplishes is essentially the reversal of a colonially-driven hierarchy of representation that has long driven stereotypes of the Caribbean, inverting its assumptions and forcing the viewer to resist the implicit threat of tropical contamination by otherness.

The next key scene is the first meeting between the Sainte-Roses and the police officers Herman and Henry, and the depth of their acceptance of ethnocultural othering soon becomes apparent (*Antilles-sur-Seine*). By reductively referring to minority-dominated Parisian suburbs – Belleville, Barbès – as microcosms of Africa, the ethnic populations and communities that dominate these areas come to embody a radical, racialized presumption of alterity and exclusion, effectively articulating the pervasive pattern of unbelonging by which France marks its others. Switching gears, Herman announces, “j’adore les Antilles,” followed by a breathless evocation of “les mangues” and “le citron vert” as “typical” – read stereotypical – Caribbean fruit. But things then go from bad to worse, as Herman engages in an all-out, caricatural imitation of the Caribbean accent, exaggerating the pronunciation that replaces the French *r* with a Caribbean *w*, hugging and stroking her body and rolling her behind blissfully in an inane parody of “the smiling, docile Antillean *doudou* of tourist promotions” (52) as Haigh puts it. But the real point here is in fact two-fold: on the one hand, Herman is certainly engaged in an act of ‘othering,’ denigrating a sub-group of her fellow French citizens through an act of mimicry that betrays and exposes the innate exoticization that undergirds her vision of France’s tropical periphery. But at the same time, it is important to note that the figure on which this parody is based is itself already a stereotype, one acknowledged and critiqued by Antilleans themselves, which means that Herman is ultimately propagating a stereotype of a stereotype. By thus compounding the original sign and act of othering, Herman’s “mammy” impression ultimately gives rise to a doubled signifier of cultural difference, in which a constructed, negativized image is used to draw attention to another constructed, negativized image. When, not content with having just one foot in her mouth, Inspector Herman asks the just-arrived Sainte-Roses “Je suppose que vous êtes la tribu?,” a clearly pejorative characterization that she subsequently modifies marginally to “le clan?” when she is nudged by Henry, it is the quiet understatement of Horace’s response that in fact highlights the rabid racism of her remark, “Chez nous on appelle ça une famille.” By displacing such forms of address and mimicry from their habitual deep conversational recesses and integrating them into the film’s dialogue, Légitimus sets out to expose both the brute casualness of the verbal stigmatization of minority groups, and the extent to which such groups must confront – and often accept – the brutalizations of caricatural stereotyping in their daily lives. Incidentally, and ironically, here, Sainte-Rose also engages in stereotyping; he assumes that Henry is the lieutenant because he is male.

The next key episode has Sainte-Rose’s son Freddy lounging on the sidewalk when he notices a couple of white police officers standing on the sidelines but beginning to take an overt interest in them. He signals their intent in a particularly telling way within the complex context of the films’ plot: “Ils vont nous tropicaliser!” he exclaims, as his father and brother try to calm him down (*Antilles-sur-Seine*). As the police officers indeed ask for ID and "carte de séjour," the clear coded reference here is to the well-known presumptive hexagonal perspective that renders every black person in Paris an illegal immigrant before the fact, placing the burden of proving their innocent – and, indeed, legitimate – citizenship on them. In an important way, here is the film in a nutshell, as this brief encounter sums up the race-based discriminatory and divisive social patterns that put the lie to myths of universalism and *intégrisme* and that continue to be the bane of the existence of the Caribbean community in Paris.

Once they make their escape, a later scene, set in the club "Antilles-sur-Seine," marks the symbolic center of the film's multiple layers of signification in a number of ways. At an initial level, as its name implies, it functions as a *mise-en-abyme* of the main armature of the plot, recuperating, appropriating and reinscribing the film's title as both a location and a way of being. The club itself is packed with a lively Antillean clientele, and the tropical décor and the *zouk* music work to intensify an atmosphere that is reflective of Antillean specificities of *francité*. Crucially, however, it is in the similarities and oppositions inscribed by two opposing entrances, that of the Antillean mayor and of the Parisian police officer, that we can see the signifying core of the entire film *Antilles-sur-Seine*. As he surveys the room crowded with Antilleans, Horace's moment of recognition is conveyed by his satisfied expression of the single word "solidarité." Here, he effectively reformulates the French national motto, as his point of view shot reveals a room full of Parisian people who look and talk like him. When his entrance is followed by that of the police officer Herman, the camera's unwavering eye remains on her and this isolating shot becomes in fact the crowd's point of view of her. Herman is clearly disconcerted by a turn of events that makes her the center of attention of the entire room, and tries a variety of strategies to escape, or at least to defuse, the room's insistent gaze. The crowd remains stubbornly unresponsive to her series of entreaties, ranging from the query "Quoi? J'ai quelque chose sur le nez?" to her assurance that "j'adore la musique antillaise," to her effort to prove this declaration by launching into her own version of the monster *zouk* hit "Kolé Séré" by Jocelyne Beroard, female lead singer of the group Kassav'. Now if, as I have argued, the goal of *Antilles-sur-Seine* is the subversion and reversal of a number of key Antillean representational stereotypes, these all arguably find their genesis in the colonial gaze that has long been an integral part of metropolitan cinema. By the same token, the parallel sequence that traces the entry of Herman as subject a short time after Sainte-Rose creates a contradictory impression of alienation, difference and unbelonging, reversing the traditional hierarchy of metropolitan ethnic majority and minority communities to inscribe oppositional patterns of community and solidarity. Herman is inscribed as a white metropolitan minority subject in the midst of an Antillean majority in the heart of the Ile-de-France, a paradox that a clip from *Kassav': Carnaval Tour* (2005) will hopefully reflect and contextualize.

The demographic and cultural developments outlined here, then, where Frenchness and Caribbeanness do not remain static, but in fact intersect with and transform metropolitan *intégrisme*, speak directly to the protean, transformative character of the Caribbean diaspora, drawing on the porous borders that it opens up to creatively redefine broader notions of nation, identity, and belonging. This psychosocial phenomenon repositions both axes of the cultural binary, and plays a key role in the reshaping of urban France through plural encounters that ground and enable hybrid forms of identity, while inscribing what Paul Gilroy calls "a diaspora dimension to black life" at the same time (155-6).

One clear conclusion to be drawn from these readings, then, is that such diasporic subjects – particularly that subject located in the post/colonial metropole – appropriates "these new political and cultural formations," as Avtar Brah puts it, so as to "continually challenge the minoritising and peripheralising impulses of the cultures of dominance" (209-10). Ultimately, then, as we go beyond the fixity of borders, boundaries and nations, we can perhaps better perceive how the diasporic condition assures a paradoxical inclusivity for the Caribbean subject, relocating her/him into what Homi Bhabha calls the "new international space of discontinuous historical realities" (217). It is in the appropriation of these forces and the marshalling of them to serve the psychosocial ends of the diasporic subject that, as Bhabha continues, "double-lives are led in the postcolonial world, with its journeys of migration and its dwellings of the diasporic" (213). In this diaspora's critical conjunction of articulation and performance, one which functions "through a structure of splitting and displacement [,] . . . the architecture of the new historical subject emerges at the limits of representation itself" (217).

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