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LANDSCAPE AND THE FEMININE VOICE: RECLAIMING IDENTITY IN THE WORKS OF MARYSE CONDÉ, SIMONE SCHWARZ-BART AND ANDRÉ SCHWARZ BART

By

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Thesis

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Caribbean Literature, Identity and the Female Voice

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This thesis examines Caribbean literature and its value in establishing identity for Caribbean peoples. The discourse of Caribbean literature as a tool for re-establishing or reclaiming identity is examined, as well as the domination of the male voice throughout Caribbean literature and theory. Through examination of the intimate connection between the feminine and the landscape of the Caribbean, the presence and significance of the female voice is established in the works of André Schwarz-Bart, Simone Schwarz-Bart, and Maryse Conde. The recognition of particularity of women’s struggles and the consequent contribution of female authors to Caribbean literature replenish a historiography which has overlooked the feminine voice and provide another facet with which Caribbean literature can be examined.
INTRODUCTION: HISTORY AND THE CARIBBEAN LANDSCAPE

In comparison with Europe and the Orient, the history of the Caribbean islands began fairly recently. In just five centuries of existence, the Caribbean has developed a multi-faceted and profoundly fragmented historical record. The documentation of Caribbean history began with Christopher Columbus’ infamous voyage to the Americas in October, 1492. In search of a direct trade route to the Orient, Columbus inadvertently landed in the Caribbean, the first part of the New World to be discovered by European travelers. In A Brief History of the Caribbean: From the Arawak and the Carib to the Present, Jan Rogozinski explains that before the Spanish arrival, the Caribbean was inhabited primarily by three groups of indigenous peoples: the Ciboney, the Arawak, and the Carib. The Ciboney occupied the northwest past of Cuba and Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic), the Arawak dominated the Bahamas, Trinidad and the Greater Antilles, and the Carib were mostly found on the Virgin Islands and many of the Lesser Antilles. In less than a decade after Columbus’ voyage gave the Caribbean islands a position on the world map, he brought the European institution of slavery, as well. “The initial groups of settlers did not go to the Americas to work, and the economy could not survive without Indian labor. Thus Queen Isabella confirmed the practice in 1502-1503” (Rogozinski 27). Slavery, therefore, has been the foundation for economy and society in the Caribbean since European empires were made aware of its existence and its available resources. However, slavery was not responsible for the extinction of the Ciboney, Arawak, and Carib peoples. The Spanish did not consciously intend to completely eliminate the indigenous populations. Exactly the opposite, they were essential to the Spanish economy. Slavery brought together native peoples and introduced them to deadly
diseases that were merely endemic childhood sicknesses for Europeans. “Isolated for thousands of years, the Arawak did not have natural immunity to the diseases carried by Europeans or Africans, including influenza, small pox, measles, malaria, and the common cold” (Rogoinski 32). These maladies spread rapidly, regardless of gender or age, and demographic losses were so severe that native Caribbean peoples never revived.

The native inhabitants of the Caribbean quickly disappeared from the islands’ landscape. Alongside the history of slavery in the Caribbean is the much overlooked subjugation of the landscape. Colonialism not only exploited African slaves, but the resources and terrain of the Caribbean as well. From the dawn of the sixteenth century until the end of the 19th century, “the islands were colonies of four major European empires that sought to monopolize their resources” (Rogoinski 3). The Caribbean became a site of constant empirical conflict between Spain, France, Great Britain and the Netherlands, as well as incessant colonial conflict between European and African cultures. By the end of the fifteenth century, there were no native inhabitants- there was no one who could claim an original connection and the Caribbean landscape. There were no inhabitants who shared a collective memory; a shared cultural heritage and identity did not exist. Therefore, nearly every inhabitant of the Caribbean is the result of transplantation. The quest for an authentic identity seeks to connect a fragmented history and truly root it in the Caribbean. The quest for identity addressed in Caribbean literature is largely a response to the fragmentation of Caribbean history and transplantation of its peoples. The struggle for control and domination of the Caribbean has played an important role in the demand to reclaim or regenerate an identity and its intimate relationship with the landscape.
THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY

To understand why the quest for a truly Caribbean identity is such an integral literary issue, it is important to understand specifically what social and individual values have been historically denied for Caribbean peoples. In his essay “What is Identity (As we now use the word)?”, James Fearon explains that conventional dictionaries fall short of capturing the essence and true meaning of identity. He argues that identity “in its present incarnation has a double sense. It refers at the same time to social categories and to the sources of an individual’s self-respect or dignity” (Fearon 2). Identity, as an essential part of one’s being and self, is presented in Fearon’s essay as both social and personal. The former is a social category that is attached to a set of values, collective characteristics, and expected behaviors. The latter is composed of “socially distinguishing features that a person takes a special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential” (Fearon ii). Fearon argues that this second part of the definition of identity formulates modern senses of pride, dignity and honor that are linked with the individual role one embraces within his or her society. Ultimately, an identity represents personal and social values which one holds to be true and which gives one a sense of pride and belonging in society. In the French Caribbean, social organization only promoted positive values for French colonizers. Many languages, many religions, and many conflicting individual and societal values were brought into contact with one another. A lack of cohesion prevented the establishment of permanent societies that could develop and form strong traditions. Consequently, the individual was faced with the responsibility of developing his or her own values and sense of pride and belonging: a quest for identity.
In the Caribbean, slavery was a colonial institution that scattered African peoples throughout various sugar plantations on the islands and, in the process, destroyed African cultures. Transplanted Africans were deprived of any form of social belonging or practice of personal values that bring individual pride, dignity, or honor. The Black Code, an official document issued by Louis XIV in 1685, specifically outlined the conditions of slavery and treatment of slaves in the French colonies. In her chapter from Penser la Créolité, titled “Codes of Law and Bodies of Color”, Joan Dayan explains that “…for blacks and slaves in French America were introduced not as persons, but as a special kind of property, a ‘thing’, according to Roman law, juridically deprived of all rights” (41). Slaves were explicitly stripped of all individual and cultural values. They were, by law, objects, property; this was their social role in the French colonies. The forty-fourth article of the Black Code stated: “Déclarons les esclaves êtres meubles, et comme tels entrer en la communauté” (30). As a result, Caribbean people of African descent are still questioning their human identity, as the psychological aftermath of slavery. The issue of objectification is extremely significant; the majority of Caribbean peoples were slaves. The ratio of slaves to colonizers was astoundingly high. “By the 1750s, almost nine out of ten men and women were slaves on all the islands where sugar was grown. Never before in human history had so high a proportion of a population been slaves” (Rogozinski 122). The quest for identity is so vigorous and pervasive in Caribbean literature because very few individuals in the Caribbean were exempt from mourning a past identity they could no longer truly embrace. The erasure of so many cultures and identities, as a consequence of this massive diasporic move, has created a persistent
pursuit of a positive and personal sense of self, a regeneration of destroyed culture and disjointed past.

The regeneration of a new and unique identity is necessary for Caribbean peoples to reclaim culturally what colonialism has violently usurped. Traditionally, colonialism is the term given to the social organization or institution in which one group of people occupies an area and controls or governs its inhabitants, often violently and by force. The colonial situation of the Caribbean is unique because the European colonizers not only overtook the land and culture of the original inhabitants of the Caribbean, but also extended colonial oppression to the masses of Africans imported in the slave trade. The colonial situation in the French Antilles is distinct because it is not simply two cultures in opposition to each other, but a superior culture that extends subjugation to many diverse peoples uprooted from their native lands and displaced in the Caribbean. For Caribbean peoples, a collective identity that could embrace all individuals does not exist; many histories, many identities, and many cultures have been brought together through a dual condition of slavery and colonization. Yet again, it is a lack of a positive Caribbean identity that has lead Antillean peoples and writers to claim through literature a personal identity in order to reclaim a past or history that colonialism and its massive displacement have stolen.

In this thesis, I will argue that a process of symbolic regeneration is necessary to reclaim that which has been stolen; a process through which identity re-emerges stronger through adversity. For the three novels that I will discuss, the landscape and natural imagery are implemented in this process. I will discuss the connection between Caribbean landscape and Caribbean identity, which provides Caribbean literature with an
extremely pertinent metaphor by which regeneration and personal connection with the landscape allows for reclamation of identity. Reclamation is necessary because colonialism has deprived African and Caribbean people of their cultures and histories; in this sense, a cultural identity has been usurped. Frantz Fanon, a Martiniquan psychiatrist and philosopher, has studied colonialism and post-colonial culture in great depth. His writings on the psychopathology of colonization explore the colonial situation and the resulting psychological effects for both colonizer and colonized. In his work *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon explains that colonialism is responsible for the violent devastation of the native (Caribbean and African) identity. Fanon explains the brutality of the ordering colonial world as one that has “ceaselessly drummed the rhythm for the destruction of native social forms,” one that has destroyed all aspects of the native’s way of life (Fanon 40). It is this violent colonial suppression of all aspects of native culture, and the equally violent importation of Africans, which appropriates the image of a stolen identity, and for that matter, any sense of ‘identity’. A total lack of cultural cohesion and rejection of individual beliefs have effectively denied Caribbean peoples a positive, authentic identity. A positive regeneration of identity is necessary for dislocated peoples to reclaim their stolen history. It is necessary for transplanted African cultures to take root in the Caribbean, to grow and regenerate personal social and individual values to forge a positive identity, truly connected to their new diasporic space.

**Identity and Caribbean Literature**

The quest to establish a positive, non-alienated identity in Caribbean literature was introduced by the Negritude movement of the 1920s and 30s. Negritude was a
literary and political movement that sought to reject European colonization and the image it created for the black man and embrace a positive black identity. The foundation of Negritude is credited to Antillean poets Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas, and African poet Léopold Senghor. With their writings, Césaire, Damas and Senghor rejected French colonial racism and sought to create and promote an identity that celebrated the essence of being black despite the presence of colonization. Senghor's poem, *Femme Noire*, epitomizes this celebration: “Femme nue, femme noire, Vêtue de ta couleur qui est vie, de ta forme qui est beauté” (151). Césaire’s epic poem *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* uses surrealist images that deconstruct and reconstruct the French language so that he is able to use the colonizer’s language to return to a metaphorical and idealized Africa that persisted in the souls of Negritude poets. For these writers, this metaphor of the native land symbolized the erasure of history and massive dislocation of African peoples. Césaire’s surrealist reconstruction of the French language allowed his poetry to reject the language of the colonizer and simultaneously convey his message: “Des mots, ah oui, des mots ! mais des mots de sang grais, des mots qui sont des raz-de-marée et des érésipèles des paludismes et des laves et des feux de brousse, et des flambées de chair, et des flambées de villes…” (Césaire 68). In this excerpt, Césaire personifies words and gives them abilities that they did not otherwise possess; in Césaire’s French, words are fresh blood and tidal waves, truly forceful and capable of destruction.

The writings of Negritude were extended politically as well; Césaire served as mayor of Martinique’s capital, Fort-de-France, from 1945 until 1983 and as the Martiniquan deputy to the French National Assembly. Senghor was the first president of Senegal when it gained its independence from France in 1960, and Damas also served as
a deputy to the French national assembly from French Guyana. The foundation of their movement realized the potential and the integrity of the black man as well as his dislocated history, a direct consequence of French colonialism. Negritude was founded in Paris; Césaire, Senghor and Damas were a part of French society as well. Their diasporic writings rejected French culture and sought to empower oppressed black people in Africa and the Caribbean. The founders of Negritude were not French, they did not want to be French, and they could not accept to be assimilated into the culture of their oppressors. In Race, Culture, and Identity: Francophone West African and Caribbean Literature and Theory from Négritude to Créolité, Shireen K. Lewis asserts: “Negritude was certainly the colonized response to cultural oppression by the French” (26). Lewis explains that the backbone of the movement was the attack on cultural assimilation, the absorption of the many cultures of the Caribbean into one superior, larger French culture. “Damas, Césaire, and Senghor saw cultural assimilation as the root cause of the black colonized acute alienation [...] For them, the destruction of cultural assimilation was a prerequisite to the quest for black identity” (Lewis 26). In Anthologie de la Nouvelle Poésie Nègre, Léon Damas addresses the issue of cultural assimilation in his poem *Pour sûr:*

Pour sûr j’en aurai
marre
sans même attendre qu’elles prennent
les choses l’allure
d’un camembert bien fait

Alors je vous mettrai les pieds dans
le plat
ou bien tout simplement la main au collet
de tout ce qui m’emmerde
en gros caractères
colonization
Negritude arose from the subjugation of blacks and the suppression of many cultures and histories. Negritude was the first movement that influenced Caribbean peoples to reject the culture of the colonizer and embrace their own as positive and prolific. From Negritude to the present, the quest for identity has been inherent in the spirit of Caribbean peoples and is recurrently reflected in Caribbean literature. Negritude was a fundamental movement in Caribbean literature because it recognized the need for a reclaimed identity of transplanted peoples. The Negritude poets looked to root themselves in Africa to reclaim a positive, black identity. While Negritude effectively identified the necessity of reclamation as important for blacks in the Caribbean, post-Negritude writers found its focus solely on a black identity to be problematic. An authentic Caribbean identity that considered all Antillean peoples and sought to take root in the Caribbean, not a mythical Africa, emerged as the subsequent focus of Caribbean literature.

The literary movements that followed Negritude were Antillité (50s) and Créolité (90s). These post-Negritude movements acknowledge the search for a “lost” or “stolen” identity and continued to embrace dissociation from cultural assimilation. These movements, however, do not concentrate on a positive identity that was solely black. Antillité and Créolité recognized that the quest for identity should seek to establish one that was Creole, uniquely Caribbean. Antillité and Créolité are similar literary movements that both embrace the pride of being Creole, of hybridity and seek to claim a sincerely Caribbean identity. French novelist, poet, and literary theorist Edouard Glissant is credited with founding the Antillité movement. “Glissant’s point of departure is a
separating out of Caribbean or diasporic identity from Negritude’s concerns with origins, homogeneity, and purity” (Lewis 70). Glissant realized that a true identity could not be regenerated through a metaphorical return to a mythical Africa that no longer existed beyond memory. In Introduction à une poétique du Divers, Glissant explains that the universal must be abandoned because it does not exist. “L’universel est un leurre, un rêve trompeur” (“Introduction à une poétique du Divers” 136). Thus Glissant’s notion of Antillité was a transition from Negritude to Créolité; it embraced the necessity for a positive identity for Caribbean peoples but recognized that authenticity could only be derived from a hybrid and truly Creole mindset. Créolité was founded by the next generation of Caribbean authors, Jean Barnabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant. The Créolité movement embraced a truly Caribbean identity, as did Antillité, and was “founded on a revolutionary break with traditional concepts of racial and cultural identity” (Lewis 89). These two latter movements recognized the plurality of Caribbean existence. The word Creole itself rejects the black/white oppositions. Creole can mean many things; it can be white, black, colonizer, colonized, or an amalgamation of either. In “Representing Race in Indiana”, Doris Kadish presents the word “créole” as problematic. Kadish explains that traditionally, the word was used to describe a white European that was born in the French colonies. “At the same time, however, definitions of the word as an adjective introduce a multiracial meaning that definitions of the unqualified noun exclude” (Kadish 22). Creolization is the creation of a new society, a mixture of black, white, European, and African. Negritude regarded black and white, colonizer and colonized as polar opposites. This rigid dichotomy was vacillating in its expression of Créolité which emerged as a much more encompassing and apt analysis of Caribbean
peoples. In his essay *Defining Caribbean Identity*, Jarrod Hayes explains that the founders of these later movements “recognize their intellectual descent from negritude but question its politics and its concept of identity” (Hayes 738).

The persistence of colonialism, of attempted cultural assimilation in the French colonies has been perpetually problematic for Caribbean peoples, and Caribbean authors have repeatedly attempted to reclaim or recreate an authentic identity for colonized peoples. In his introduction to *Francophone Post-Colonial Literature*, Kamal Salhi explains that the works of post-Negritude Francophone writers address and promote the “cultural hybridity of post-colonial national identities, a characteristic that is often misrepresented and subverted” (xii). The search to regenerate a *true* Caribbean identity—one that was not created or imposed by a dominating culture—has been the objective of post-colonial Francophone literature.

**The Caribbean Landscape and Identity**

In a chapter titled *Landscaping and Identity in Contemporary Caribbean Literature*, Eric Prieto introduces the notion that “It has become a commonplace assertion of post-colonial cultural theory that the landscape and geography of colonized or formerly colonized territories have provided an especially potent source of the people who inhabit those territories” (141). The landscape represented in Caribbean literature parallels the physical landscape of the Caribbean itself. It is satiated with exotic and picturesque natural elements: the sounds, the smells, the vibrant colors and exotic flora and fauna which create the allure and appeal of the islands. Glissant explains, “Describing the landscape is not enough. The individual, the community, the land are
inextricable in this process of creating history. Landscape is a character in this process” (“Caribbean Discourse” xxxvii). Caribbean literature rarely fails to incorporate the natural elements of the landscape in the narrative. This is true of each author, who is impacted upon by the landscape in individual ways. In Martinique, the volcano is an extremely significant symbol. The 1902 eruption of Mt. Péléé in St. Pierre, the former capital of Martinique is a tremendously important part of the island’s history. The entire city was destroyed by the eruption that spared only one life. The volcano is subsequently an important image in the poetry of Aimé Césaire, the founder of Negritude. In Cahier d’un Retour au Pays Natal, Césaire uses the image frequently.

Au bout du petit matin, sur cette plus fragile épaisseur de terre que dépasse de façon humiliante son grandiose avenir- les volcans éclateront, l’eau nue emportera les taches mûres du soleil et il ne restera plus qu’un bouillonnement tiède picoré d’oiseaux marins- la plage des songes et l’insenseé réveil (Césaire 12).

Césaire recognizes the significant metaphor that the volcano represents, the natural cycle of the earth. In Becoming Black, Michelle Wright explains that the reconciliation of this cycle is extremely important for Césaire. “It is the volcano destroying the surrounding landscape; it is a devastated Caribbean island suffering under racism and poverty; it is both progress and decay” (Wright 105). Mt. Péléé had destroyed St. Pierre in Césaire’s lifetime. The volcano was also where many slaves and native Caribbean peoples committed collective suicide rather than become slaves. Césaire’s intimate connection with the landscape of his own Martinique provided poignant and appropriate metaphors
that are active characters in his writings; metaphors which are the essential elements
Glissant also calls for in his description of landscape as a character in the process of
creating history. The brilliant description of the Caribbean environment is not simply
useful in creating a background for the narrative that enhances the reader’s experience. Its
function is very specific in connecting Caribbean peoples with their environment and
reclaiming lost history and identity.

The history of colonization and imperialism has drastically impacted the physical
geography of the Caribbean, which is intimately connected with the Caribbean identity.
The division of the Caribbean landscape is very much connected to the division between
civilization and nature, between plantations and marooning, between slavery and liberty.
The flat lands where sugar cane grows successfully are separated rather abruptly by steep
mountainous areas ascending to the skies above. In Martinique, for example, the
Northern area of the island is almost entirely consumed by Mt. Péléé, the destructive
volcano of 1902. Flat lands are only found on parts of the Western coast and tucked in a
gentle bay on the Eastern side near present Fort-de-France. In Guadeloupe, on the other
hand, the Southern part of the island is almost entirely made up of the volcano La
Soufrière, and flat lands are only found coastally and in the Northwestern extension of
the island. Just like its importance for Aimé Césaire, the volcano was a dual image of
destruction and protection; a destructive force but also safety and liberation for those
slaves who chose to flee to the mountains.

Maroon slaves also found protection in the mangrove forests of the Caribbean.
Mangroves are symbolic of the importance of landscape in Caribbean literature. “The
mangrove forest is a mesh of both land and water, and in that sense it is fluid, borderless, open to influence and change” (Mitsch 55). The rhizomatic root system of the Mangrove grows laterally, and is an enmeshed tangle of branches. The mangrove, which historically signified sanctuary for maroon slaves, has come to represent the tangled, fragmented cultures of the Caribbean that together, grow and thrive.

Landscape is a physical representation of colonial invasion and domination. Palestinian-American theorist Edward Said, founder of the post-colonial theory in the twentieth century, explains:

Imperialism after all is an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control. For the native, the history of his or her colonial servitude is inaugurated by the loss to an outsider of the local place, whose concrete geographical identity must thereafter be searched for and somehow restored (84).

Said makes an indissoluble connection between the quest for Caribbean identity and the geographical landscape. He explains that European imperialism not only attempted to overpower people, but also the environment in which they lived. Said argues that wherever Europeans arrived to colonize and manipulate the lands resources, they instantly changed the local habitat. This transition was sudden for overpowered natives whom, Said explains, had little choice in the matter as new “plants, animals, crops, and farming as well as building methods invaded the colony and gradually turned it into a new place, complete with new diseases, environmental imbalances, and traumatic dislocations” (84). The invasion and subjugation was as present in the landscape of
colonized peoples as it was for the peoples themselves. Said’s assessment of the transformation colonialism imposes upon the colonized geography is especially pertinent in the Caribbean. Upon their arrival, the Spanish raped the Caribbean islands for gold, extracting as much as six hundred pounds from Hispaniola alone in 1501. In return, they brought disease and death to the islands. “The earth’s winds and currents make the Caribbean a natural highway both for men and for parasites travelling from Europe and Africa to the Americas,” and with them they brought horses, cattle, pigs and goats who rapidly multiplied in the absence of natural predators in the Caribbean (Rogozinski 29). European colonizers brought parts of Europe with them that permanently established the flat lands of the islands as areas of civilization that had never before existed. These areas became tersely juxtaposed with the untamed wilderness of the mountains in the Caribbean. Colonialism created an antagonism between these two geographical areas that continues to be present in Caribbean literature.

Edouard Glissant elaborates on Said’s notion of geographical violence and colonialism, discussing its specificity in the French Caribbean. Glissant introduces the idea that the displacement Caribbean peoples experience with the landscape creates a void, an erasure of history. This is all the more pressing in the significance of the quest for a true Caribbean identity.

French Caribbean is the site of a history characterized by ruptures that began with a brutal dislocation, the slave trade. Our historical consciousness could not be deposited gradually and continuously like sediment, as it were, as happened with those peoples who have frequently produced a totalitarian philosophy of history.
for instance European peoples, but came together in the context of shock, contradiction, painful negation, and explosive forces. This dislocation of the continuum, and the inability of the collective consciousness to absorb it all, characterize what I call a nonhistory. The negative effect of this nonhistory is therefore the erasing of the collective memory ("Caribbean Discourse" 61-62).

Said contended that the subjection of the colonized people is experienced concurrently with their environment, and Glissant identifies this as especially true for the Caribbean. Eric Prieto addresses this issue in his essay *Landscaping Identity in Contemporary Caribbean Literature*. Prieto discusses the importance of an "originary bond". An attachment that is originary signifies a relationship that implies indigenous heritage. Glissant addresses this lack of an originary bond, which he calls a nonhistory, and credits it for the void of collective memory that Caribbean peoples seek to fill by establishing a unique, Creole identity. Prieto argues that this nonhistory or absence of an originary bond is closely linked with West Indian writers' sensitivity to the landscape and its power to symbolize identity.

The tension between the temporality of history and the ahistorical permanence of national identity implied by the use of landscape imagery has special significance in the cultural context of the French West Indies. From the earliest Creole (i.e., native-born) poets, to the writers grouped around Aimé Césaire and the journal *Tropiques*, to the generation of Edouard Glissant, to the more recent *Groupe de la Créolité*, the landscape and natural environment of the islands have played a key
role in the struggle to articulate the contours of a specifically Caribbean cultural identity (Prieto 141).

It is here in Caribbean literature that the description of the landscape departs from its traditional role as a mere background or setting. While each theory of Caribbean and Francophone literature uses the landscape and natural imagery in a unique and continually changing manner, Caribbean “writers seem to agree on one important point: the determinant role played by the landscape in shaping the character and identity of the populace” (142). Prieto identifies one of the consequences of what he calls and “identitarian attitude” toward the environment as the recurrent tendency for writers to depict the landscape as an active agent, as a character itself which functions within the narrative. The landscape, therefore, is more than just a setting in which the characters interact, but an entity which itself is active in the narrative. Likewise, Glissant argues that the description of the landscape alone is insufficient, but that the fusion of individual, community, and landscape is essential in creating history and creating identity. This is precisely why he insists that landscape must be a character in this process. The landscape is not just a symbol of identity; it has been a factor in shaping the identity for the individuals within the narratives, just as it has been the main factor in the history of slavery and colonization.

Caribbean Literature, Landscape and Reclamation

The intimate connection that Caribbean history has with the landscape offers Caribbean writers a unique ability to reshape their history and attain an identity. Glissant says, “Our landscape is its own monument: its meaning can only be traced on the
underside. It is all history” (“Caribbean Discourse” 11). The authors as well as the characters are personally linked to the landscape in Caribbean narratives, because there is a pressing need for regeneration, for reclamation of the land. Said argues that literature is an effective tool in this recovery because it is at first only possible through the imagination. Said argues that the landscape is so inherently important for colonized peoples because colonialism’s violence was primarily geographical. “The search for authenticity, for a more congenial national origin that provided by colonial history, for a new pantheon of heroes, myths, and religions, these too are enabled by the land” (Said 86).

As colonial violence was largely geographical, reclamation of Caribbean identity is indissolubly connected with the landscape of the Caribbean. The Caribbean environment suffered the same historical violation and exploitation as Caribbean peoples, and Antillean literature reflects this connection. In this way, reclamation of the Caribbean landscape symbolizes reclamation of history and identity. “According to Glissant, in the Caribbean, unlike in the West, the literary project and the historical project are inseparable because the recuperation of historical memory is fundamental to the constitution of a literary corpus in the Caribbean” (Lewis 77). In his literature, he aims to “show how History (whether we see it as expression or lived reality) and Literature form part of the same problematics: the account, or the frame of reference, of the collective relationships of men with their environment, in a space that keeps changing and in a time that constantly is being altered” (“Caribbean Discourse” 69-70). Literature, he argues, is capable of reforming- it can not rewrite history, but it can change the way in which we examine it. Glissant explains that the Caribbean faces the problems of “a ruined history,
which we must give shape, restructure” (244). The novel is the tool, a written literature in which authors empower mythical, historical characters, emphasizing their abilities to restructure their past, their histories. Glissant recognizes the history of the Caribbean as pluralized and nonlinear, a view of history which is essentially non-Western. Glissant’s embrace of Antillité replaces a singular, linear history with a multiplicity of histories and voices; a history, in other words, which is Creole in nature. Glissant’s notion of history therefore accounts for the many races, multiple cultures, and countless histories that make up a society of collective diversity in the Caribbean. Glissant’s greatest contribution to Caribbean literature was effectively identifying its utility in the regeneration of an authentic, Caribbean identity. “Moreover, to remedy Caribbean people’s lack of historical consciousness, Glissant proposes breaking down the barrier between history and literature so that the fiction writer can effectively recreate past events in the Caribbean” (Lewis xvi). Caribbean literature is saturated with themes that concentrate on landscape, history, and identity because it serves as an instrument for Caribbean authors either to search for and reclaim a personal history or identity, or accurately present the urgency and importance of such a recovery for Caribbean peoples.

**Root to Rhizome to Regeneration**

It is essential to understand that for all movements, from Negritude to Créolité, the Caribbean landscape has been an essential space in which Caribbean peoples seek to root themselves in the earth as a result of transplantation. Again, the connection between landscape and individual is essential in the foundation of a sense of belonging, a positive sense of self. In Césaire’s *Cahier d’un Retour au Pays Natal*, the use of landscape is
decisive; he pays homage to the landscape and its authority as a literary and linguistic tool:

Je retrouverais le secret des grandes communications et des grandes combustions.
Je serais mouillé de toutes les pluies, humecté de toutes les rosées. Je roulerais comme du sang frénétique sur le courant lent de l'œil des mots en chevaux fous (Césaire 38).

The strongest image that Césaire draws from the landscape is the tree. “The tree, roots plunging into the soil and branches aspiring to the sky, is usually taken to symbolize the ancestral link with the African past” (Prieto 143). Roots have served as one of the greatest metaphors in even the earliest Caribbean literature, for it has been the focus of transported peoples to establish a sense of belonging, of being, and reject the sense of displacement imposed by slavery. As Negritude was concerned primarily with the construction of a black, pro-African identity, the tree was a pertinent symbol by which poets and writers could root themselves and remedy the Diaspora they felt as a result of slavery’s displacement of African peoples. In Cahier d’un Retour au Pays Natal, Césaire uses the image while contemplating his own rootedness, symbolizing the pursuit of what Prieto labelled as an originary bond:

Qui et quels nous sommes? Admirable question!
A force de regarder les arbres je suis
devenu un arbre et mes longs pieds
d’arbre ont creusé dans le sol de larges
sacs à venin de hautes villes d’ossements
à force de penser au Congo
je suis devenu un Congo bruissant de forêts et de fleuves (Césaire 56).

Césaire’s declaration is that by looking at trees, in examining his roots he has achieved becoming a tree himself. He reflects on Africa, and in rooting himself in the ground and in his reflection he becomes Congo himself, he forms a sense of natural identity of which he can be proud. The tree, and specifically roots, is an indispensable metaphor which embodies both the landscape and the quest for identity in Caribbean literature.

Later movements in Caribbean literature abandoned the metaphor of a singular tree with a singular root system for a metaphor that was more applicable for Caribbean identity. Glissant’s ideas of identity are plural and fragmented; his history is anti-linear and anti-teleological.² It is the plurality of identity that marks a departure from Negritude; Glissant and the Créolistes (Chamoiseau, Bernabé, and Confiant) reject Negritude’s initial demand for the creation or reclamation of a positive black identity in pursuit of a multi-faceted and diverse Caribbean identity. “There is a difference between the transplanting (by exile or dispersion) of a people who continue to survive elsewhere and the transfer (by the slave trade) of a population to another place where they change into something different, into a new set of possibilities” (“Caribbean Discourse” 14). In rejecting linear history, Glissant proposes “a counterconcept he labels ‘transversalité’ – the subterranean convergence of the diverse histories of the Caribbean peoples” (Lewis 78). The notion of subterranean convergence is more complex than root- it is a root system. In Glissant’s Poetics of Relation, he introduces the idea of a more Creole root
metaphor: the rhizome. A rhizome is biologically defined as a rootstock; a fleshy, creeping underground stem by means of which certain plants propagate themselves. Buds that form at the joints produce new shoots. Thus if a rhizome is cut by a cultivating tool it does not die, as would a root, but becomes several plants instead of one. The rhizome is an exceptionally pertinent metaphor for the rooting, or search for identity in the Caribbean. The rhizome is representative of Caribbean peoples’ ability to grow, and grow stronger after being culturally “cut”. Glissant’s notion of subterranean convergence is symbolic of a cultural unification that is much stronger than superficial connections which Caribbean peoples have been denied by a past of uprooting and dislocation.

Glissant credits twentieth century philosophers Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari for their criticism of notions of the root and being rooted. Glissant defines a singular root system, like that of a tree, as a “unique stock taking all upon itself and killing all around it” (“Caribbean Discourse” 11). Glissant praises Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization of the rhizome as a more appropriate metaphor for Caribbean history. Glissant defines the rhizome as an intertwined root system which spreads by ground or air, “with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently. The notion of the rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rootedness but challenges a totalitarian root” (11). Glissant acknowledges that the symbol of the rhizome “conceives for the entire Caribbean region the convergence of rerootings in our true place” (Lewis 74). The symbol of the rhizome communicates the aptitude of Caribbean peoples to grow stronger through adversity; to not die, but become exponentially stronger. Glissant’s impecably germane metaphor of the rhizome expresses the intrinsic traits of Caribbean culture: hybridization, continuation, and perpetuation.
The image of a rhizome provides Caribbean peoples with an agency that encourages the regeneration of identity that is inherently linked with the Caribbean landscape. Caribbean peoples cannot be cut without growing stronger, they do not allow for the presence of a totalitarian root to prosper in the landscape they have finally been able to claim as their own. The inherent presence of the landscape in the Caribbean narrative and the cultural essence of hybridization, continuation, and perpetuation are the foundation of the notion of regeneration in this thesis. Regeneration is defined as an intransitive verb: 1, to become formed again. As a verb: 1b, to change radically and for the better. 2a, to generate or produce anew 3, to restore to original strength or properties. Regeneration is how a rhizome grows. Glissant’s conception of the rhizome is essential in this thesis because it symbolizes growth and re-growth, and restoration. For Caribbean peoples, their existence has been more than rooting and growing, but a regeneration of culture and identity.

In the discourse of Caribbean literature, however, the voice of the Caribbean woman is often overlooked. From Negritude to Créolité, the male voice has been dominant in the quest for an authentic identity. I will examine three novels whose authors and protagonists are Caribbean women. This thesis will examine their capability of regeneration, physically and metaphysically; their ability to generate and produce anew an identity which Caribbean literature seeks to reclaim. The Caribbean woman’s ability to regenerate is examined in the context of the landscape within which she acts and with which she interacts. The female characters in André and Simone Schwarz-Bart’s Mulâtresse Solitude, Simone Schwarz-Bart’s Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle, and
Maryse Condé’s *Moi, Tituba, Sorcière...* exercise their ability to regenerate as a means of survival and persistence in their conditions of oppression and subjugation.
Notes


HISTORY, WOMEN AND LANDSCAPE

The ability of the woman to reproduce and give life is a faculty which is recognized far beyond the scope of Caribbean literature. Biologically, women are unique in their maternal ability to grow and produce life. While reproduction always is the consummation of an interaction between a man and a woman, the woman is aptly paralleled with the landscape as she nurtures the seed inside herself and gives it the opportunity to grow. What is fundamentally important is the correspondence between the Caribbean woman and her landscape and her inherent feminine ability to regenerate life.

Historically, women have had a very unique relationship with their Caribbean landscape on slave plantations and in maroon societies. Slavery in the French Antilles was born of the need for workers to cultivate sugar cane for what became an extremely profitable European industry. Slaves were imported primarily to support the demand for sugar, to plant, grow, and harvest. In Women and Slavery in The French Antilles, 1635-1848 Bernard Moitt dedicates his examination of slavery to the distinct condition of women and their position in the hierarchy of the plantation system in the Caribbean, and argues that the dynamics of this system were very different for female and male slaves. Most notably, he introduces the field work as inarguably the most arduous and exhausting task. Apart from the physical adversity that field labor exercised upon its workers, it was the most demeaning as well. Slaves were reduced to their most bestial qualities; there was neither humanity nor dignity in their treatment in the fields. In his analysis of women and slavery, Moitt includes many historical observations of the French missionary, Père Jean-Baptiste Labat. Père Labat spent the final years of the seventeenth century in the West
Indies, primarily Guadeloupe and Martinique. Alongside his devotion to the foreign mission, Labat was also interested in the sugar industry and its modernization, and governed his own plantation where he owned and brutalized his slaves. Moitt cites Père Labat in his observation that the “French use neither oxen nor horses in cultivating the soil. They only use slaves from Africa or the distant shores of America” (Moitt 42).

Field labor, cultivation and sugar production created a very personal connection between the slave and his or her land. Moitt further explains that field labor fell to rest mostly on the shoulders of women, a fact which is often overlooked. Within the hierarchy of the plantation system, men were exempt from field labor because plantation owners allocated specialized and artisanal tasks to men. “Thus, as in Africa, slave men maintained their traditional spheres of influence and only they were coopers, carpenters, masons, and blacksmiths” (36). It is true that there existed specialized tasks that were assigned to women; however, these tasks often involved domesticated labor and interaction with the plantation owners. However, it was not the female sex that made slaves preferable for such tasks; the preference was for “mixed-race household workers, especially females” (59). It was, therefore, the black female slave who was condemned to labor in the sugar cane fields. “There can be little doubt that field slaves, who were mainly women, were the backbone of the sugar economy” (39).

The Caribbean woman- descending from slaves- has an intimate connection with the Caribbean landscape. This forced occupation of growing and creating manifests itself in two ways. First, a profound connection is established between women and the land: women in society, as in nature, are encumbered with the responsibility to create and grow
with infinite possibility from a given- sometimes forcibly- seed. Second, Caribbean women are quick to recognize their freedom to choose whether or not they wish to embrace the role as the producer of life. Sometimes slaves attempted to abort their children as an alternative to delivering them into a life of slavery. Moitt recounts the story of one slave woman, known as La Pucelle des Isles. She waited until the priest asked her at her wedding if she would accept the man her owner chose for her as a husband, and she replied, “No, my father... I do not wish to marry this man or any other man. I am miserable enough as it is without having to bring children into this world to be more miserable” (81). For that reason, fertility among slaves was astonishingly low. Moitt cites the research of Nicole Vanony-Frisch in her article “Les Esclaves de la Guadeloupe à la fin de l’Ancien Régime d’après les sources notoriales, 1770-1780”, which report that 51% of black women and 50% of mixed-race woman were childless (90).

Women who escaped enslavement on the sugar plantations in the Caribbean became indispensable in maroon societies. These women were especially connected to the landscape and were responsible for the biological and social regeneration of Caribbean peoples. In their essay *Black Women and Survival: A Maroon Case*, Kenneth Bilby and Filomina Chioma Steady examine women’s significance in marooning and the propagation of maroon societies. The landscape was extremely valued by marooned slaves. Maroon slaves sought to survive by living in maroon societies, which were possible only where geographical conditions permitted some isolation; often in deep forests and mountain inlands. Maroon slaves became intimately connected with their surrounding landscapes because it was necessary for their protection and ultimate survival.
Bilby and Steady focus their examination of maroon societies on the valuation of women and their contribution to maroon survival, which they highlight as one of the most dominant cultural themes in maroon society. Bilby and Steady argue that persistent necessity for survival in its most immediate form reinforced high valuations of women. First and foremost, women were incredibly essential to maroon societies for their ability to reproduce biologically. “Clearly, a key consideration of the early Maroon groups must have been how to reproduce [...] to ensure their physical and social continuity” (Bilby, Steady 455). Bilby and Steady recognize that this was particularly important because it reflected an “emerging consciousness of themselves as a society, as opposed to a temporary aggregate of individuals” (455). The essay also paints a portrait of women as the single stable element in Maroon society. The incessant need to avoid discovery at all times, to know and patrol their landscape to protect their existence called for Maroon men to play a somewhat transient role in Maroon society. “Owing to the military nature of the society, women and children came to comprise a stable core tied to the village and the land immediately around it [...] they were the true denizens of the Maroon settlements” (455).

The success of Maroon settlements produced a new group of individuals which the Caribbean had not previously supported: native Creoles. Those born into the condition of marooning were not transplanted from distant lands with different cultures, but brought into existence as native Caribbean peoples. It was largely in maroon societies that “for the first time there existed a solid foundation of individuals inalienably tied to their land” (Bilby, Steady 456). But it was physical reproduction on behalf of Maroon women, more precisely, that truly enabled the developing Creole culture to adapt and
regenerate. Maroon settlements became the first true inhabitants of the Caribbean islands since the extermination of the Arawak Indians. Their recognition of the Caribbean landscape as their own is permanently connected with women and their ability to regenerate:

...females and their offspring were the enduring segment of Maroon society, through which the developing creole culture, and most importantly, Maroon identity, were passed on from one generation to the next. Hence, although the key protagonists in the military struggles of the Maroons may have been men, the key protagonists of regeneration, biological and social, were women (Bilby, Steady 457).

Bibly and Steady recognize the importance of women and landscape in Maroon societies and choose to honor women as the protagonists of regeneration, the exceptional ability of Caribbean women which this thesis examines. Most importantly they present this regeneration as indissolubly attached to the landscape: a recurring theme that will probably not cease to present itself in future generations of Caribbean literature.
I have chosen to examine the question of regeneration that connects the Caribbean woman and landscape to her landscape in the following novels: Moi, Tituba, Sorcière, by Maryse Condé; Mulâtresse Solitude, by André and Simone Schwarz-Bart; and Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle by Simone Schwarz-Bart. In these three novels, the landscape is an active agent. The question of landscape provides a pertinent metaphor that represents the complexity of the Caribbean woman as well as the themes of maternity and matrilineage in the novels. Furthermore, we will see that the use of the supernatural intimately connects the landscape with these three Caribbean women in life and death.

The characters, in each of these three works, consciously feel a personal relationship with the landscape. The women in each novel are strengthened by nature and their comparison with it; they possess a specific ability to give life and regenerate in the manner of a rhizome, growing stronger after they are cut, appearing refreshed and more lively after the storm. Each character faces her adversity with head held high, and embraces the natural cycle of darkness and light; “...voir s’éteindre le feu et les petits chiens s’amuser dans la cendre” (“Pluie et Vent” 61). The characters rely upon the elemental cycles of the earth for certainty that suffering is a part of life. Solitude, Tituba and Télumée relate to the reader that their suffering is inscribed upon the soul of Caribbean and slave women.

The true formation of an authentic and resolute identity that each of the women comes to embody is never detached from the landscape, providing each with an ultimate sense of belonging and character.
Maryse Condé and Simone Schwarz-Bart are both women authors from Guadeloupe, and André Schwarz-Bart, Simone’s husband, is a French author. There is some controversy surrounding the authorship of Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle; the first French edition of the novel was published only under the name of André Schwarz-Bart. The English translation was published under the authorship of both André and Simone Schwarz-Bart, and modern prints credit both authors. There has not been an in depth study that distinguishes the separate roles of the two authors; however, the later publications, which bear the name of both authors, signal the presence of the female Caribbean author in the novel. In this thesis, the novel will be considered as a collaborative effort between Simone and André Schwarz-Bart.

As aforementioned, Glissant identifies literature as a tool effective in erasing what he terms the “nonhistory” of the islands. The “nonhistory” of the islands is the result of a massive diaspora-induced uprooting. This is especially true in each of these novels. Moi, Tituba, Sorcière, and Mulâtresse Solitude are fictional re-writings of overlooked, yet important, historical figures. Moi, Tituba, Sorcière, is the story of a black witch among many villagers accused of collaborating with the devil in the puritan community of Salem, Massachusetts. In a circular movement, Condé recreates Tituba’s story from her birth as a slave in Barbados. After being freed, she lives peacefully and blissfully in a small shack in the forest on her former plantation. Tituba falls in love with a man enslaved to a white woman in Barbados, and her refusal to part from him leads her on a journey to America, prison, and back again to Barbados. Upon her return to Barbados, she finds a country in a tumultuous state of conflict between plantation owners and maroon slaves. In death, finally and permanently reconnected with her native land, Tituba
listens to the slaves of Barbados sing songs about her. Her legacy provides her with an authentic, resilient, and eternal Caribbean identity. Condé rewrites the story of Tituba, of whom there is very little historical record. Condé’s Tituba herself objects to her erasure from history: “Je cherche mon histoire dans celle des Sorcières de Salem et ne la trouve pas” (“Moi, Tituba, Sorcière…” 230). In her foreword to the English translation of *Moi, Tituba, Sorcière…*, African-American feminist author Angela Y. Davis calls Condé’s fictional revision of Tituba’s story a revenge attempting to revoke Tituba’s disappearance from history: “Maryse Condé lends her the words that assist her to tell you and me her story, speaking of her life in her own voice— from the womb to the realm of the dead” (xx). Davis identifies Condé’s revision as a transcendent revenge, a re-telling of a history. The novel includes the actual interrogation of this black witch of Salem from the historical accounts of the village’s witch trials, as Condé recreates Tituba’s entire life and history around the small biographical element that Western historiography was willing to record. Using literature as a tool to reclaim a nonhistory, Maryse Condé’s novel succeeds in “filling the silence and voids with voice and presence […] via an active, constitutive voice, Tituba leaps into history shattering all the racist and misogynist misconceptions that have defined the place of black women” (xxi). As a sorceress who commands the supernatural and a slave suffering from a diasporic condition in America, Tituba’s relationship with the landscape provides her with strength and endurance as a Caribbean woman. The songs about Tituba that the slaves sing at the end of the novel symbolize the legacy Tituba imparts on Barbados. Death also provides Tituba with an ultimate and eternal connection with the landscape of Barbados. Her spiritual connection in death and the legacy she leaves forge a true, authentic identity for Tituba.
In Mulâtresse Solitude André and Simone Schwarz-Bart also recreate the life of an often overlooked figure in Caribbean history. The opening pages of the novel cite a brief historical account from Oruno Lara’s 1921 Histoire de la Guadeloupe: “La mulâtresse Solitude allait être mère, arrêtée et emprisonnée, elle fut suppliciée dès sa délivrance, le 29 novembre 1802” (“Mulâtresse Solitude” 7). La Mulâtresse Solitude was a maroon slave executed after giving birth. She is venerated today as a symbolic character of strength and resistance, but like Tituba, the black witch of Salem, her recorded history is short. Tituba’s terse historical record is indicative of historiography’s lack of interest for female heroic figures in Caribbean literature. The mulâtresse was born to the slave woman Man Bobette. After her mother escapes the plantation in pursuit of a life of marooning, the beautiful, light-skinned young girl becomes a decoration in the master’s house. This eventually drives her to the edge and she continues to wander through her life, first as property and then as maroon. Solitude is never able to escape slavery’s oppression. As a mulâtresse, Solitude is still an object in the masters’ eyes, but she is not completely accepted among slaves, either: “…car le cordon des mulâtres finit toujours par tomber” (“Mulâtresse Solitude” 63). Solitude wanders from plantation to plantation, and finally maroon colonies. Solitude seeks a positive identity that the condition of métissage denies. Once a zombie, once a meek woman with no voice, the mulâtresse Solitude becomes a leader of a band of maroons and eventually finds motherhood and happiness, albeit a brief experience. André and Simone Schwarz-Bart’s excavation work is very similar to Condé’s, all give an active voice to women lost in history. Glissant’s conceptualization of literature as a means by which histories can be
rewritten and identities can be reclaimed, is visible in the two novels’ power to reform the
past and create a story that is new, positive, and uniquely Caribbean.

Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle, Simone Schwarz-Bart’s personal work, is not
a rewriting of a historical figure. The novel is the story of Télumée and her ancestors, the
Lougandor women. Télumée is raised by her grandmother, Toussine, who guides her
through life teaching her about the strength of women and their ability to carry any load
with which they may be burdened. Télumée spends a happy childhood tucked in the
forest community with her grandmother. She eventually marries the man she has shared
affection with since childhood, but her happiness is ephemeral and is soon washed away.
She is unable to become pregnant, her husband becomes an alcoholic and regularly beats
her, reducing her to a shadow of the woman she is to become. That said, in the novel,
Télumée is the most resilient character, and overcomes her sorrows to find true happiness
in old age. Although the novel does not recount the life of an actual historical figure, it is
a rewriting of a nonhistory nonetheless. In her essay “The Female and the Self in Schwart-
Bart’s Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle”, Karen Smyley Wallace explains that Télumée
Miracle is a fictional autobiography inspired by an old Guadeloupean woman from
Schwarz-Bart’s childhood who fascinated the young author. Wallace writes that from a
broader perspective, the novel is not just the story of one woman and her ancestors. “Its
more compelling message is found in the praise it offers to an entire generation of black
Caribbean women: to their fortitude, their resilience, their dignity” (Wallace 428). In
Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle, Simone Schwarz-Bart is able to pursue personal
reclamation of a nonhistory that symbolizes universal struggles of the Caribbean woman.
As these authors establish their characters as determined, unchangeable fixations in the landscape of the Caribbean, they highlight the relationship between the individual and his or her surroundings. The characters are intimately connected with their native lands; their enduring presence in the Caribbean landscape defines their true identities. The fervent presence of the landscape as an active character in these novels and its equation with the female speak to persistence and perpetuation of the Caribbean woman in her native land, forging her truly Caribbean identity. Each story begins with the story of the heroine’s mother or grandmother; the stories traced in these novels began long before the birth of the main characters. Upon finishing the novel, the reader is given the feeling that their story is not really over; it will live on even in death, if not through their spirit, at least through memory. This creates a cyclical narrative which parallels the natural cycle of life, death, and rebirth. The characters in the novel suffer and die, but the strength and identity they develop as Caribbean women allow their spirits to be reborn, even stronger. At the end of Mulâtresse Solitude, Moi, Tituba, Sorcière..., and Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle, the characters remain with their native landscape and continue to inspire and give life.
Notes

THE LANDSCAPE OF THE CARIBBEAN IN MULÂTRESSE SOLITUDE,
PLUIE ET VENT SUR TÉLUMÉE MIRACLE, AND MOI, TITUBA, SORCIÈRE

Geographical Divisions

The conspicuous geographical distinction of the Caribbean divides civilization from uncivilized areas. Civilized and natural areas are distinguished geographically in the Caribbean, creating two separate settings with which the characters interact. The flat, cultivated landscape of the sugar plantations, for example, symbolizes French colonialism and slavery. In contrast, the wild, natural state of the mountains offers protection and refuge for maroon slaves. Civilization is presented as a setting where the evil parts of humanity reside, and where good people succumb to foolishness and transgression. For Solitude and Télumée, the forested mountain is in stark contrast with the flat areas of sugar cane, plantations, and civilization in Guadeloupe. In Condé’s novel, Tituba explains the duality of the Caribbean:

C’est que nos pays ont deux faces. L’une que parcourent les calèches des maîtres et les chevaux de leurs hommes de police armés de mousquets et suivis de chiens aux aboiements furieux. L’autre, mystérieuse et secrète, faite de mots de passe, de conseils chuchotés et de conspiration de silence. C’est sur cette face-là que je vivais, protégée par la complicité de tous (“Moi, Tituba, Sorcière...” 241).

For Tituba, the contrast is further extended between Barbados in its entire colorful flora and fauna, and the cold, harsh New England climate. Such geographical disparities divide the natural and the wild from the restrained and civilized and serve as a metaphor for the attempted domestication of the Caribbean islands and their inhabitants.
Solitude is never comfortable in society on the flat, open plantations. Solitude is drawn to the natural and uncivilized parts of the mountains. She wanders through Guadeloupe, searching for connection and acceptance. The presence of people, however, seems to make eyes flood with endless tears. “Elle s’appliquait à imiter les gestes de la vie, mais des nappes d’eau coulaient sans arrêt de ses yeux (“Mulâtresse Solitude” 81). When she finally finds a sense of belonging, it is with the maroon slaves and their colony they call Petite Guinée, “comme ils désignaient leur petite enclave en pays blanc” (91).

The deep forest in the mountain is where Solitude finally finds refuge from the anguish that has for so long burdened her heart. “Solitude se sentait de plus en plus vide et légère, une simple bulle d’eau, une pellicule traversée des vagues de reflets lumineux” (100).

Here, in altitude and green density, Solitude is venerated as a woman with the heart of a true nègresse. She is then able to distance herself geographically and metaphorically from the white man’s flat land of grief and violence.

For Télumée, her childhood happiness is found in the deep forest called Fond-Zombi where her grandmother lives. Like Solitude, Télumée’s experiences with a ‘civilized society’ are not positive, and she is made aware of its evil side. This is represented by the larger town of L’Abandonnée, where Télumée was raised, and the small forest village of Fond-Zombi. Before going to live with her grandmother, Télumée witnesses the murder of her father by a vagrant whom he had befriended and to whom he gave food when the rest of L’Abandonnée had rejected him. The words of her dying father embody the iniquity that accompanies civilization. He forgives his killer, saying: “...je pardonne Germaine, parce que sa volonté ne lui appartenait plus: le mal des humains est grand et peut faire d’un homme n’importe de quoi, même un assassin,
messieurs, c’est pas une blague, un assassin...” (“Pluie et Vent” 40). This sad event is contrasted with the happiness Télumée feels as a child in Fond-Zombi. Télumée embraces the natural state of Fond-Zombi and her grandmother’s space. “La case de Reine sans Nom était la dernière du village, elle terminait le monde des humains et semblait adossée à la montagne” (47). When Télumée is forced to leave Fond-Zombi temporarily to seek employment as a servant, she describes: “C’était l’époque où les blancs brûlent leurs terres et des souches noirâtres s’étendraient à l’infini, dans une âpre odeur de nature boucanée” (89). The lack of nature is extremely stifling for Télumée, and she returns to Fond-Zombi, addressing the geographical division between the civilized world, the world of whites and sugar, and the flourishing natural world: “... j’aboutis à une longue allée verte et soyeuse, toute luisante d’une herbe grasse, par-delà des bosquets d’hibiscus blancs, rouges, roses qui l’ombrageaient. Derrière moi, la route des cannes se poursuivait à une petite longueur de gaffe, mais déjà je me sentais dans un autre monde” (89). The green path shadowed with hibiscus flowers that takes Télumée back to Fond-Zombi makes Télumée feel like she is entering an entirely different world. The flourishing natural landscape of this path represents the comfort Télumée finds in the village societies of the forest.

For Tituba, the geographical division is marked between two separate countries: Barbados and America. Tituba’s two worlds are not the mountain and the plantation, but the beautiful Barbados she loves and the frigid America for which she departs. The warm, inviting landscape of Barbados is juxtaposed with the cold and unfriendly New England environment. What is beautiful in Barbados is the opposite in Salem:
Comme la nuit change selon les pays que l’on habite! Chez nous, la nuit est un ventre à l’ombre duquel on redevient sans force et tremblant, mais paradoxalement, les sens déliés, prompts à saisir les moindres chuchotements des êtres et des choses. À Salem, la nuit était un mur noir d’hostilité contre lequel j’allais me cognant. Des bêtes tapies dans les arbres obscurs huluaient méchamment à mon passage tandis que mille regards malveillants me poursuivaient ("Moi, Tituba, Sorcière" 103).

Tituba describes Salem as a town that was carved out of the forest “comme une plaque de calvitie dans une chevelure embrouillée,” (91) literally an area that is devoid of growth. Tituba also recognizes the malevolent injustices of the civilized New England. Townspeople of Boston warn her against leaving their protected area because she might meet a savage Indian. Tituba thinks to herself: “Les Indiens? Je les redoutais moins ces ‘sauvages’ que les êtres civilisés parmi lesquels je vivais qui pendait les vieillardes aux arbres” (84). The longing Tituba feels for her native landscape is immense; she must return or risk being poisoned by the civilized new world. “Cette sombre fleur du monde civilisé m’empoisonna de son parfum et jamais plus par la suite, je ne respirai de même façon” (162). The division between the civilized and the natural world is ingrained in the very landscape. Solitude, Télumée and Tituba, suffocated by the arid, infertile landscape of civilization, find comfort with the wild, uncultivated and natural landscape. The landscape is not just descriptive of two separate backgrounds in Moi, Tituba, Sorcière, Mulâtresse Solitude, and Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle. The landscape is a different character in each setting: one that is stifling and unfruitful for the characters, or one that is prolific and fruitful, encouraging connection and growth.
Nature and the Female

Given that nature is feminized and women are presented with floral and elemental descriptions, nature and women become inseparable entities in Moi, Tituba, Sorcière, Mulâtresse Solitude, and Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle. In her collected essays on women in Caribbean literature, Maryse Condé explains the connection between Caribbean literature and the landscape: “La littérature contemporaine oscille entre la dénonciation et l’exaltation. Exaltation de la beauté naturelle et dénonciation de la condition faite à l’homme” (“La Parole des Femmes” 59). Condé contends that contemporary writers struggle to find a balance between these polar positions in the recognition of individual and landscape. In the literature of Simone Schwarz-Bart, André Schwarz-Bart and Maryse Condé, appreciation of the natural beauty of the landscape delivers the heroines from the inveterate condition of mankind. Despite their suffering, Tituba, Solitude and Télumée grow stronger. The image of the rhizome comes to mind: when it is cut, the roots it forms beneath the surface become a plant that is even more resilient.

Nature is never separate from the Solitude, the Lougandors, or Tituba. The flowery descriptions and exotic images are not solely for the aesthetic pleasure of the reader. On the contrary, they provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the Caribbean woman’s point of view. Maryse Condé comments: “À travers Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle, la nature est omniprésente. Elle ne dissocie pas de l’homme. Elle est aussi vie et avec lui […] elle forge le destin de l’île” (“La Parole des Femmes” 64). Furthermore, the individual and the landscape are alike in their obligation to the laws of
nature: “L’homme est une plante puisqu’il est un ‘morceau de pays’ au milieu des autres et comme tel, soumis aux mêmes lois que l’ensemble” (“La Parole des Femmes” 66). In this way, nature and the female are one and the same in Moi, Tituba, Sorcière, Mulâtre Solitude, and Pluie et Vent sur Téhumée Miracle. Regeneration and growth of the landscape is therefore symbolic of the Caribbean woman’s personal development and perpetuation.

In Pluie et Vent sur Téhumée Miracle, Téhumée is continuously compared with a river or a stream. Life itself, for all men and women is often compared to water as well, the grand natural cycle that is dropped from the sky, begins in the mountains, and finishes in the sea, eventually returning to repeat its cycle. In her discussion of the novel, Condé explains: “Par définition, ‘l’ile est une terre entourée d’eau.’ Ajoutons à cela, les rivières, les sources, la pluie. Il est donc naturel que l’eau joue le plus grand rôle dans la littérature antillaise” (“La Parole des Femmes” 68). When she first meets her grandmother, Téhumée describes her grandmother as lively, although her “temps d’ancienne était venu, le cours de sa vie avait baissé, c’était maintenant une eau maigre qui s’écoulait lentement entre les pierres, en un petit mouvement quotidien, quelques gestes pour quelques sous” (“Pluie et Vent” 49). A recurring theme in Pluie et Vent sur Téhumée Miracle is the idea that every person is a stream that will inevitably drown in the sea. Schwarz-Bart continuously alludes to this metaphor with many characters in the novel, depending on their positions in life:

Toutes les rivières, même les plus éclatantes, celles qui prennent le soleil dans leur courant, toutes les rivières descendent dans la mer et se noient. Et la vie
attend l’homme comme la mer attend la rivière. On peut prendre méandre sur méandre, tourner, contourner, s’insinuer dans la terre, vos méandres vous appartiennent mais la vie est là, patiente, sans commencement et sans fin, à vous attendre, pareille à l’océan (81).

The parallel of life and river is symbolic of the continual presence of the Caribbean soul within the landscape; it is cyclical and never-ending.

In Mulâtrèse Solitude, there is an abundance of the natural Guadeloupean images which Simone Schwarz-Bart generously bestows upon the reader in Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle. The metaphor of the water cycle is important, because although it is constantly changing, it is at the same time always the same. Solitude’s mother, known as Bayangumay in Africa, compares the reincarnation of her grandmother to a reflection in this cycle:

Depuis son plus jeune âge, la petite fille rêvait à sa grand-mère plus ancienne, qui elle-même était le reflet d’une grand-mère plus ancienne encore, et ainsi de suite, à l’infini. C’était comme les images qui apparaissent dans le miroir de fleuve, les unes après les autres chassées par le courant, et toujours renaissantes ("Mulâtrèse Solitude" 12).

Babayangumay is raped on the boat between Gorée and Guadeloupe. Many times in the novel, Solitude is compared to “une pauvre graine” (46). This description of Solitude as a poor seed carries two meanings: first, she is a poor seed who has not found a place to root herself, a seed who has yet to blossom. Second, she is a poor seed, planted in her mother’s womb by violence and violation, grown into a woman with two souls. When she
is born, Solitude is compared to a Sapotille. “Les esclaves voyaient dans cette graine bâtarde une Sapotille, du nom d’un fruit indien à l’épiderme rougeâtre, à la chair douce-amère, comme tissée d’ambiguités” (45). This ambiguous, light skinned fruit that Solitude represents is juxtaposed with the description of the second daughter her mother gives birth to as a free maroon. Man Bobette’s second child is “aussi noir et jolie qu’une graine d’icaque” (72). The images of the two Caribbean fruits used to describe the two daughters are extremely significant. The icaque is a smooth, dark, bluish-black fruit that hangs from the plant by a thick stem. The Sapotille has a tan or light brown skin that envelops a fruit of the same color. Solitude is hurt by the news that her mother is happy with her new, dark fruit. However, Solitude’s comparison to a Sapotille has an ulterior meaning: the mature Sapotille fruit holds a large, heart-shaped seed that is very dark brown, sometimes black. When Solitude finally finds belonging with the maroons, they pronounce that she has the heart of a true nègresse, and the image of the Sapotille becomes all the more pertinent. Solitude’s search for identity is a result of her condition of métissage. Solitude is part white and part black, but simultaneously neither white nor black. Solitude finds connection with the landscape and a positive sense of identity when she is accepted by the maroon colony, for she is a “true nègresse” at heart.

When Solitude arrives at the maroon colony, she crosses the river Goyave that separates the colony from the rest of the world. She throws herself in the flowing current and begins to cross the river, approaching the maroon guard. “Un remous gonflait sa jupe et l’étendait sur les eaux, faisant d’elle une plante aquatique qui penchait d’un côté, de l’autre, selon la direction de courant” (92). Solitude becomes an aquatic plant; without rooting herself in the ground she is able to grow regardless of where the current takes her.
In this image, Solitude is like a mangrove. The roots of the mangrove dangle above the water; metaphorically, the mangrove rejects the necessity to be connected to the ground by one strong, single root. Root development and regeneration is possible in land or water. The terrestrial notion of one strong root as necessary for growth is rejected, symbolic of the regeneration of Caribbean culture. The images pulled from the Caribbean landscape to describe Solitude are not just visual representations; they are symbolic of her femininity and ability to adapt and regenerate.

In Moi, Tituba, Sorcière… Tituba is also represented by descriptions of her native landscape, Barbados. John Indien, her first lover, professes the strength of his feelings for her but admits that he fears her as well, “parce que je te sais violente! Souvent je te vois comme un cyclone ravageant l’île, couchant les cocotiers et élevant jusqu’au ciel une lame d’un gris plombé” (“Moi, Tituba, Sorcière” 53). Upon meeting Pastor Samuel Parris’ wife, Élizabeth, on the boat in departure from Barbadoas, the puritan woman describes Tituba’s hands with a floral description. “Mais c’est vrai que tes mains sont douces. Douces comme des fleurs coupées” (65). The metaphor of a cut flower is extremely relevant as Tituba is being torn away from her island, like a beautiful flower that has been cut and will soon wilt and die. Tituba does not die, however; she is like the rhizome, and ultimately grows stronger.

Tituba the sorceress can be beautiful yet destructive; and she compares herself to a volcano, symbolic of her power to one day errupt. Her blood is lava, and when she is affronted, she is like the active volcano of Guadeloupe: “Tout mon sang bouillait à l’intérieur de mon corps” (41). The natural metaphors incessantly employed in the
description of women forge an intimate connection between the women and their landscape in the novels. For Solitude, Télumée, Tituba, the Caribbean woman and her landscape are representative of one another. In this sense, the natural images Condé and André and Simone Schwarz-Bart attribute to their characters reflect their ability to grow, be cut, and regenerate.

Landscape and Emotion

The landscape often represents the feelings and moods of the characters in the novels. A strong example of this representation can be found in the image of the garden. A blooming, fertile garden represents happiness, and sadness accompanies spaces of overgrowth or sterility. In Mulâtresse Solitude, Solitude is truly happy in the mountains with the little Congo man she and her nomadic maroon followers encounter. Hidden in the forest, Maîmouni lives alone. He gardens and keeps a few animals in his corner of the earth, a true paradise for maroon slaves.

Et il se penchait sur l’un de ses jardins secrets, une longue fosse rouge voilée par les taillis, les fougères, où tous légumes et racines poussaient enmêlés, entrecroisés à la mode d’Afrique, afin que chaque plante joue correctement sa chanson sous le ciel (“Mulâtresse Solitude” 118).

The joy of life is marked by gardens, the metaphor for the regeneration of Caribbean identity. Regardless of the destitution of circumstances, cultivation represents strength and survival. Maîmouni’s gardening brings Solitude pleasure, even happiness as she develops affection for the Congo man. This joyful African cultivation of plants that sing their own songs is juxtaposed with the songs the slaves sing on the plantations: “...Ah
telle est notre destinée, Au jardin avant soleil levé, C’est ainsi que la loi l’ordonne…” (85). The flourishing landscape of Maîmouni’s garden that Solitude finds at the end of the novel accompanies the development of her identity. By carrying Maîmouni’s child, Solitude symbolically roots herself in Guadeloupe. Her search for identity has denied the part of her that is white and seeks to fully become black. Maîmouni’s garden is symbolic of her own fertility and her ability to regenerate an identity in this Caribbean space.

The garden is symbolic of Tituba’s happiness, as well. While her mother is pregnant, she falls in love with Yao, Tituba’s adoptive father. Her mother’s happiness corresponds with the nurturing of her garden “Pendant ce temps, ma mère faisait pousser dans son carreau de terre des tomates, des gombos ou d’autres légumes, cuisinait, nourrissait une volaille éthique” (“Moi, Tituba, Sorcière” 17). Likewise, when Tituba is freed from the Darnell plantation, she retreats to a secluded area in the woods that she calls a small corner of earth near the river.

J’y bâtais toute seule, à la force de mes poignets, une case que je parvins à jucher sur pilotis. Patiemment, je colmatai des langues de terre et délimitai un jardin où bientôt crûrent toutes sortes de plantes que je mettais en terre de façon rituelle, respectant les volontés du soleil et de l’air (24).

Tituba’s jovial garden in Barbados is contrasted with the garden that surrounds her miserable home in Salem. Arriving in front of the house, she tells the reader: “Elle se tenait un peu de guingois au milieu d’un immense jardin, entièrement envahi de mauvaise herbe. Deux érables noirs la flanquaient comme des cierges et il se dégageait d’elle
comme une hostilité repoussante” (92). Plants are essential for Tituba to practice magic; the garden symbolizes her strength as a sorceress and happiness as a Caribbean woman. Tituba experiences an immense longing for Barbados and its inviting, ever-green landscape. In Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle, the connection between garden and sentiment is exceptionally present and evokes emotion. Télumée and her grandmother Toussine plant and grow life in their gardens in blissful periods of their life; overgrowth and infertility accompany times of anguish and hardship. When Toussine is first married, she is overjoyed at planting flowers around her home and growing vegetables in the garden. Her sublime happiness is found in this metaphor:

Puis tous deux s’en allaient ensemble cultiver leur jardin et tandis qu’il béchait, elle traçait les sillons et tandis qu’il brûlait les herbes, elle ensemencait, et le crépuscule des îles tombait sur leur dos avec sa brusquerie habituelle, et, profitant de l’ombre naissante, Jérémie prenait à même la terre un petit hors-d’œuvre du corps de sa femme cependant qu’il lui murmurait toutes sortes de bêtises…

(“Pluie et Vent” 21).

Toussine and Jérémie’s happiness swells when they are blessed with twin daughters. This is contrasted with Toussine’s emotions of misfortune and the living space they inhabit after one of her two twin daughters dies in a fire that destroys their home and all of their belongings. This new living space is cold and devoid of nature with the exception of toads and bats. “Une seule pièce y était habitable, à l’étage, une sorte de cabinet dont on comblait les ouvertures avec des panneaux de carton. Quand il pleuvait, un filet d’eau s’écoulait dans un baquet disposé sous la brèche, et la nuit venue le rez-de-chaussée
devenait le refuge des crapauds, des grenouilles et des chauves-souris” (25). Toussine is
not immediately affected by her daughter’s death, but becomes mute and eventually
passes her days in a coma-like state. Her blooming happiness withers; “La feuille tombée
dans la mare ne pourrit pas le jour même de sa chute, et la tristesse de Toussine ne fit
qu’empirer avec le temps, justifiant tous les mauvais présages” (26).

After three years in an almost catatonic state, Toussine regains her livelihood.
Toussine’s happiness is renewed as if the sun rose once again on her life that had been
dormant in the night. “Toussine mettait les rideaux aux fenêtres, plantait des oeillet
d’Inde autour de la ruine, des pois d’Angole, des racines, des touffes de canne congo pour
Éloisine, et un beau jour, elle émit en terre un pépin d’oranger à colibris” (27). Toussine’s
happiness regenerates from destitution and sadness, and is deeply connected with the re-
growth of flowers she cultivates amongst the physical ruins surrounding her. This is a
symbolic rebirth for Toussine. The villagers who once called her Reine Toussine, because
of her life of opulence, begin to call her Reine sans Nom. Through light and dark,
Toussine remains a queen.

In the same way as her grandmother, Télumée’s gardening represents her
contentment in Fond-Zombi with Élie. “Je regardai Fond-Zombi par rapport à ma case,
ma case par rapport à Fond-Zombi er je me sentais à ma place exacte dans l’existence
[…] ma destinée était de vivre sur une branche, à Fond-Zombi, sous l’aile d’Élie” (126).
Télumée expresses her profound delight with Élie and their home, all in bloom, as one of
the happiest times of her life:
Ce fut une des plus belles époques de ma vie, époque où Fond-Zombi s’étira, fleurit et rayonna. Un petit vent de prospérité flottait sur le village, les champs de cannes s’étendaient, des champs nouveaux se défrichaient, les bananiers courbaient sous les poids de leurs fruits, et, venus de la Basse-Terre, des expéditeurs achetaient les récoltes sur pied (134).

Télumée’s happiness, too, is short-lived. Storms destroy Élie’s construction materials, and his profession and sense of self-worth are washed away with the rain. He weeps to Télumée: “... ce que j’ai toujours craint est en train d’arriver, nous n’habitons plus la terre ferme, Télumée, nous sommes dans la haute mer et les courants et ce que je me demande, c’est si je vais me noyer comme ça, du premier coup...” (145). The paradox of life presented in Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle is that firm earth, rooting, and regeneration are symbolic of happiness, while happiness itself comes and goes, like day becomes night in a natural cycle.

When Élie’s sadness gives way to complete despair, he spends his days inebriated, swimming through a sea of alcohol and absinthe and he begins to beat Télumée. Élie becomes an incomprehensible being to her, but her love for him endures his violent attacks. She avoids the natural and beautiful days she once loved in Fond-Zombi. “Je commençai alors à fuir la lumière du jour, car la misère d’une femme n’est pas une tourmaline qu’elle aime à faire étinceler au soleil” (148). Her beloved home and garden become neglected and overgrown. “Cependant les herbes de ma cour poussaient, elles me recouvraient entièrement et je me sentais comme un jardin à l’abandon, livré à ses ronces et à ses épines” (161). The garden is not only a symbol of prosperity and joy
for Toussine and Télumée, but effectively mirrors their sentiments; the landscape gives the reader access to the deepest emotions that the heroines experience.

**Landscape and Sexuality**

Landscape is highly sexualized in Caribbean literature, and furthermore feminized. Balmy temperatures, moisture and humidity, fertility and perpetual bloom render the Caribbean environment as a lucid comparison with the sexuality of the Caribbean woman. By the natural topographic curves of the volcanic islands, the Caribbean itself is a feminized entity. Solitude, Toussine, and Tituba connect their sexuality with the landscape, describing their arousal with natural, powerful elemental forces.

For Tituba, sexuality is a very natural act. Tituba discusses sexuality with Élizabeth, the wife of the puritan pastor, who describes sex as an uncomfortable and odious act. “Je protestai: Odieux? Pour moi c’est le plus bel acte du monde [...] n’est-ce pas celui qui perpétue la vie?” (“Moi, Tituba, Sorcière” 70). Tituba’s sexual acts are also described with natural elements, often waves of passion and floods of excitement. Her first orgasm in the novel is compared with the tides of the ocean: “Jaillie des profondeurs de mon corps, une marée odorante inonda mes cuisses. Je m’entendis râler dans la nuit” (30). Her sexual passions with her lovers John Indien and Benjamin Cohen d’Azevedo are fluid movements compared to elemental movements of water conveying the physical sensations she achieves through intercourse. The inundating, vigorous forces of nature that represent sex for Tituba are contrasted sharply with the unnatural sexual constraint imposed upon the young Puritan girls. “Aussi si je ne les aimais pas toutes, je les
plaignais avec leur teint cireux, leurs corps si riches de promesses, mais mutilés comme ces arbres que des jardiniers s’efforceraient de nanifier!” (97). The comparison of young puritan girls to dwarfed trees is made in contrast to Tituba’s sexuality that grows with vigor and unrestraint.

Furthermore, Tituba is compared to the islands of the Caribbean itself when she is raped by the puritan ministers of Salem in order to compel her to confess her sins. In her article *Reading in Circles: Sexuality and/as History in I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* Michelle Smith argues that the Caribbean “can be read as having suffered the ‘humiliation of a loveless possession’: beneath the English, the French, the Spanish and the Dutch” (604). Smith compares the physical incursion of the Caribbean landscape by European imperialism to the violation Tituba experiences during her rape. She relives this scene with the puritan ministers in her dreams, expressing the impact of desecration on the collective Caribbean memory.

In *Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle*, the landscape is used to reference the changes in Télumée as she becomes a woman and discovers her sexuality. Wallace regards sexuality and sexual fulfillment in Schwarz-Bart’s novel as the segment that “highlights the author’s rhythmic and colorful use of poetic imagery, which although written in French prose, captures the spirit of the creole language. Thus the reader is treated to plethora of images that link woman to nature at various stages in her life” (431). Toussine describes her emotions while admiring Jérémie: “Elle regardait la taille de l’homme, et elle la voyait souple et élancé, elle regardait des doigts, et elle les voyait aussi agiles et effilés que les feuilles du cocotier au vent, elle contemplait ses yeux et un
grand apaisement se coulait dans son corps” (“Pluie et Vent ” 17). Wallace explains that the sexualized woman sees her agitation in natural images, while her sexuality is described in terms of the landscape as well. “She becomes ‘canne congo’, ‘jeune cocotier’, fleur de coco’, fruit à pain’, ‘balisier rouge, ‘baguette de bamboo’, ‘filao’, ‘flamboyant’, ‘canne campèche’, and ‘nénuhar’” (Wallace 431). Even men in the novel appreciate the natural imagery that represents the female sex. Père Abel, Élie’s father, alludes to the mystery of women, explaining to his son: “...hélàs, où aller pour crier?... c’est toujours la même forêt, toujours aussi épaiss... alors mon fils, écarte les branches comme tu peux, voilà” (“Pluie et Vent ” 72). In their youth Élie and Télumée spend their days together beneath a large mango tree. Télumée recalls these moments of her youth, referring to the meetings between herself and Élie as conversations between two green fruits, presaging the affection they would share in maturity. Toussine and Père Abel encourage the affection between Télumée and Élie, and reserve Thursdays as a time when they can be together. Becoming a woman and learning of sexual attraction, Télumée gushes: “S’il n’y avait eu qu’Élie, je serais une rivière, s’il n’y avait eu que la Reine je serais la montagne Balata, mais les jeudis faisaient de moi la Guadeloupe tout entière” (73). Discovering her sexuality, Télumée becomes the entire island itself, in all its warmth and fertility.

Near the end of the novel, Amboise leaves Fond-Zombi for La Folie, to spend his last days with Télumée, whom he has always loved. Even in her old age, Amboise finds her young and green. “Télumée, bel bonheur, tu es plus verte et plus luisante qu’une feuille de sanguine sous la pluie et je veux être avec toi” (206). Sexuality and the
feminine are one and the same for the Lougandor women, representative of their personal and indissoluble connection with the landscape.

**Landscape and Maternity**

In *Mulâtresse Solitude*, the feminine sexuality is most strongly associated with the landscape and maternity in tandem. Growth and perpetuation of the landscape are palpable metaphors for maternity. “À travers toute l’oralité antillaise se trouve magnifiée la Mère, porteuse de dons, dispensatrice de biens” (“La Parole des Femmes” 41). The geography of the Caribbean evokes an extremely motherly image, as well. Islands, protected and surrounded by the sea can be compared to children protected in their mother’s womb. Motherhood is also important in the development of identity for Caribbean women, whether they embrace the role as a giver of life or their ability to reject it. “Perhaps the most natural association between the themes of birth, rebirth, and female identity may be found in the role of motherhood” (Wallace 430). Solitude is a fruit, a seed as described above. The novel addresses sexuality as growth and a blooming garden. In her mother’s Africa, cultivation of rice is the foundation of the Diola community. On her wedding night, as Bayangumay prepares to be taken by her husband, the narrator explains: “Afrique s’opère en elle la germination qui anime toutes choses, depuis les profondeurs de la terre jusqu’aux étoiles” (“Mulâtresse Solitude” 29). Bayangumay tells her husband she is honored to carry the seed of a tree such as him. The connection between maternity and the landscape extends to her daughter, Solitude. Unlike Tituba and Télumée, Solitude spends very little time in the company of men. Her own sexuality is not exceedingly present in the novel until she meets the maroon Congo.
man, Maîmouni. Finding herself, becoming attached to her landscape as a maroon, Solitude develops a sense of fertility. As the garden is a symbol of happiness for Tituba and Télumée, it serves a more extensive function for Solitude. The garden symbolizes the connection Solitude develops with her landscape. Her happiness is described in union with the blooming of Maîmouni, but it is also symbolic of her own fertility. Maternity is a metamorphosis for Solitude; her condition of métissage that had forged a void between her and the landscape is filled when she becomes pregnant with the Congo man’s child. Metaphorically, she is able to regenerate a part of Africa within herself like Maîmouni reproduces a part of Africa in Guadeloupe within his garden in the mountains. “Mais le petit homme savait, poussait contre elle ses grands yeux d’eau tranquille, un peu lunineuses, et lui touchait le ventre avec cette sûreté, cette retenue, cette élégance mystérieuse qu’il avait pour les légumes de son jardin” (120). This regeneration is essential for Solitude; it gives her a sense of identity and anchorage that she has nomadically searched for throughout the novel. Maîmouni tells Solitude the father’s hand is a sun for the child, attributing his role as the father to light and nourishment and her role as a mother to the landscape, a fertile space to grow his seed. Although she is executed before ever meeting her child, the ultimate connection between woman and landscape is formed intra-uterine.

In Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle, Télumée never becomes pregnant. Her sexuality is ardently connected to images from the landscape- trees, leaves, flowers- but she never expresses a shared fertility with the landscape. This makes Télumée question her femininity. One night, in a haze of inebriation, Élie tells Télumée: “... tes seins sont lourdes, et ton ventre est profond, mais tu ne sais pas encore ce que ça signifie d’être une
femme sur la terre, tu ne le sais pas encore, je te dis” (“Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle” 155). This discourse evokes Simone de Beauvoir’s seminal question from the introduction to her text Le Deuxième Sexe, which is now regarded as a decisive work in feminist literature. Beauvoir poses the question : “qu’est-ce qu’une femme?” (Beauvoir 11). Maryse Condé addresses Beauvoir’s text in La Parole des Femmes, in the discussion of maternity in Caribbean literature. Condé highlights Beauvoir’s assertion that women are conditioned to believe that through maternity, they will achieve their physiological destiny, her natural vocation as an organism designed for the perpetuation of the species. These existential contemplations force Télumée to convince herself that her sterility dissociates her from being a woman, from becoming fertile and blooming like her garden and home in Fond-Zombi. She expresses her confusion about her abusive husband and her female identity: “...j’étais loin du compte, la certitude qu’il me restait bien des découvertes à faire avant que je ne sache ce que signifie exactement cela: être une femme sur la terre” (“Pluie et Vent” 159). Even as a young girl, Télumée is troubled by Élie’s declaration that men have strength and women are crafty, but for the woman, “elle a beau ruser son ventre est là pour la trahir et c’est son précipice” (71). The reader takes comfort in Télumée’s eventual realization, through the comfort and wisdom she bestows upon the villagers of Fond-Zombi and La Folie (who in adoration, name her Télumée Miracle), that she is able to perpetuate life without physically creating a child: “it is the inhabitants of the small mountaintop community of Fond-Zombi and the Caribbean people in general who become the direct heirs to her wisdom. They are her symbolic offspring” (Wallace 431). Télumée comes to understand that maternity is not the sole
gesture by which women nurture and give life; she recognizes herself as truly *une femme sur la terre*.

While maternity serves as a physical metaphor of growth and regeneration, and can attach one to her landscape, the freedom to accept or reject one’s condition of motherhood is equally important. As echoes of slavery continue to be present in the Caribbean, the value of freedom is highly esteemed. Solitude’s mother, known as Man Bobette in slavery, escapes her life on the plantation and becomes a maroon slave. As Solitude is the product of her mother’s rape by an English sailor, she represents for her mother the violation the colonizers impose upon her being. Leaving Solitude, she rejects her condition of motherhood and slavery, free to pursue her own happiness. Condé praises women globally for their rejection of their role as life givers under the notion that it is their physiological destiny to do so. She discusses the importance of this rejection in Caribbean literature:

> Elles exigent le droit de choisir l’époque et le nombre de leurs maternités par le contrôle de naissances, elles réclament la liberté de l’avortement et refusent de considérer la stérilité comme une malédiction strictement féminine. On peut se demander si on trouve l’écho de ce combat dans la littérature féminine des Antilles et quel est, compte tenu de la complexité des rapports amoureux et familiaux, le statut de la mère, personnage romanesque (“La Parole des Femmes” 40).

In *Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle*, Télumée’s biological mother rejects her maternal role. She abandons her for a handsome, well-off Créole man and the life of her dreams.
By this abandonment Télémée comes to live with her grandmother, Toussine. Télémée does not hate her mother or her actions, and she explains “qu’un rien, une idée, une lubie, un grain de poussière ne suffisent à changer le cours d’une vie” (“Pluie et Vent” 46). Télémée admits that her life would not have followed its course if this part had not happened, and without contempt or sorrow she says “ma mère avait trouvé son dieu ce jour-là” (46). In Pluie et Vent sur Télémée Miracle, the role of the mother and her familial obligations in Caribbean society are questioned. Toussine’s loving acceptance of Télémée and her role as the ideal mother, juxtaposed with Victoire’s ability to reject her condition of motherhood without regret, portray maternity as a feminine condition to which one is never bound. The beautiful sense of rootedness and identity that maternity offers Solitude represents the mystery of the female and her ability to give life. However, in the case of Solitude’s mother and the women in Pluie et Vent sur Télémée Miracle, the portrayal of maternity is significant because ultimately the woman is able to embrace her maternity or reject it, and she is a woman regardless of her choice.

The complete reception of freedom of choice is most strongly presented in Moi, Tituba, Sorcière... . Tituba expresses her anguish at the fact that she chooses to be a slave, to be with her lover John Indien. She considers the slaves of Barbados freer than herself. “Car ils n’avaient pas choisi leurs chaînes [...] Moi, c’était là que j’avais fait” (“Moi, Tituba, Sorcière...” 45). The choice she makes to become a slave is juxtaposed with the choice she makes to reject her role as a mother. Once arriving in Salem, Tituba discovers she is pregnant. She relates this discovery to the reader in the same sentence as her decision to abort her child: “Ce fut peu après cela que je m’aperçus que je portais un enfant et que j’ai décidé de le tuer” (82). Tituba uses her supernatural powers to stop her
pregnancy. She relates the misery that the condition of maternity represents for slaves:

"Pour une esclave, la maternité n’est pas un bonheur. Elle revient à expulser dans un monde de servitude et d’abjection, un petit innocent dont il lui sera impossible de changer la destinée" (83). Slaves are bound to their condition; Tituba’s abortion of her child is, in this sense, liberation and a symbol of freedom: Tituba’s freedom to choose, and the child’s freedom from a life as a possession. When Tituba is imprisoned, she shares a cell with Condé’s version of Hester Prynne, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s heroine in The Scarlet Letter. Condé re-writes Hester as a much more vivacious, active character than the Hester Prynne who accepts her condition of maternity and her scarlet letter. She describes her life to Tituba: her arranged marriage at age sixteen to a repulsive reverend and her four pregnancies. She reveals to Tituba that she took potions and laxatives to abort each one. Hester is now pregnant with her lover’s child, awaiting her husband’s return and her punishment. Tituba leaves for her trials and when she returns, the guards inform her that Hester committed suicide. The re-writing of Hester Prynne’s history and her refusal to bring children into the world she lives in connects her with Tituba. This connection represents the choice of maternity as ultimate and universal for women.

The Caribbean woman and maternity share a two-fold connection. Solitude, for example, welcomes her role as a mother and feels more connected to the Caribbean landscape through maternity. However, the importance of maternity as a choice for Caribbean women continues to respond to the implications of slavery. The landscape is representative of maternity because it reflects women’s natural, biological ability to produce life. A woman’s choice to accept or reject this role is emphasized for Télumée
and Tituba; as they remain connected to their landscape and give life without becoming mothers themselves.

**Maternal Choice and Matrilinage**

In celebration of maternal choice, the authors of Mulâtresse Solitude, Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle, and Moi, Tituba, Sorcière distance themselves from presenting maternity as a necessary condition in the formation of a female, Caribbean identity. However, the strength that is derived from relationships between mothers, daughters, and grandmothers is significant in the formation of identity for Caribbean women. Instead of praising only the physical act of reproduction, the novels pay tribute to the importance of matrilinage for Solitude, Télumée, and Tituba. Maternity is intimately tied to the landscape, for the reasons previously discussed. However, maternity in the novels is not particularly indicative of the relationship between mother and daughter. These relationships are also represented by elements from the landscape: rising and setting suns and the ever-flowing water cycle; maternity and physical regeneration do not solely connect mothers to the landscape. Matrilinage and the relationship between mother and daughter are symbolized with natural images from the Caribbean as well. “La mère symbolise aussi l’île dans sa beauté, sa chaleur, sa profusion végétale, mais aussi l’apréte de ses cyclones et de ses volcans et l’aridité de certaines de ses terres” (“La Parole des Femmes” 43). Her ability to be all of these qualities, beautiful and warm or tumultuous and sometimes dry- connects the mother with her landscape beyond her capacity to physically reproduce. In the three novels, pregnancy and childbirth alone do not represent the complexity and significance of mother-daughter relationships.
While Télumée’s mother is free to reject her maternal role, Télumée finds strength as a woman through her grandmother, Toussine. Télumée is proud of being considered Toussine; she finds strength in her matrilineage.

Dans mon enfance, ma mère Victoire me parlait souvent de mon aïeule, la négresse Toussine. Elle en parlait avec ferveur et vénération, car, disait-elle, tout éclairée par son évocation, Toussine était une femme qui vous aidait à ne pas baisser la tête devant la vie (“Pluie et Vent” 11).

Grandmother and granddaughter enjoy an extremely intimate connection. Télumée presents herself as part of Toussine, and Toussine as part of herself. “Ma mère la vénérait que j’en étais venue à considérer Toussine, ma grand-mère, comme un être mythique, habitant ailleurs que sur terre, si bien que toute vivante elle était entrée, pour moi, dans la légende” (11). Toussine is equally proud of her existence in her granddaughter. “Elle vivait par moi, elle respirait par ma bouche” (67). Télumée begins her own story by recounting her grandmother’s history. She begins with Toussine’s birth, expressing “que la vie commença pour la jeune Toussine, aussi délicatement qu’un lever de soleil par temps clair” (12). The symbol of a sunrise is evocative of a continual cycle, with no beginning and no end, a continual balance between light and dark. The sunrise is symbolic of the beginning of Toussine’s life, a sun that will inevitably set and rise again.

The novel presents life as a dichotomy between good and bad, and exalts the strength of women to persist through the darkness to the certain light that lies ahead. Toussine fills Télumée’s head with sayings that prepare her to accept life’s good and bad. Toussine explains: “... derrière une peine il y a une autre peine, la misère est une vague sans fin,
mais le cheval ne doit pas te conduire, c’est toi qui dois conduire le cheval” (79).

Working as a servant at Belle-Feuille, Télumée would see her smiles in shadows and hear
her proverbs in the wind, and she would sing in memory of Toussine, her sayings
becoming all the more important and true: “... et je faisais mon ouvrage en chantant, et
lorsque je chantais je coupais ma peine, et ma peine tombait dans la chanson, et je
conduisais mon cheval” (92). The sunrise bringing light upon the day of the Lougandor
women and the wind bringing Toussine’s words of wisdom to her grandmother represent
the landscape, an important device in connecting Télumée with her grandmother, the
earth, and the grand cycle of life. The matrilineage of the Lougandor women provides
Télumée with endurance and strength.

In Mulâtresse Solitude, Solitude begins her story with her mother’s story.

Solitude’s mother, Bayangumay, is the reincarnation of Solitude’s great-grandmother,
Pongwé. Bayangumay is proud of being her grandmother: “Sa mère de sang la rassurait,
lui rappelait cette marque encore visible auprès de son nombril, évoquait tous les gestes,
toutes les façons, de moduler la parole humaine, toutes les expressions de son visage qui
appartenaient bel et bien à sa grand-mère” (“Mulâtresse Solitude” 13). The mark she
speaks of is a birthmark, just above her navel. When she is born, a similar mark is
described on Solitude’s back: “… la tache universelle des métis était à la forme d’une
poire, à la dimension d’une pièce de monnaie, et elle avait la couleur violette ardente des
fleurs lourdes et penchées de la banane” (45). As an infant, Solitude is taken from her
mother because she is light-skinned, by which she is destined to serve in the master’s
house. She cannot be separated from her mother. Any attempt would result in “une enfant
exsangue, fiévreuse et sans voix, mais se refusant à tout autre sein que celui de la
négresse Man Bobette; comme si, ainsi qu’on chuchotait dans les cases des Nègres
Nouveaux, le cordon ombilical n’eût pas été réellement coupé” (47). Solitude feels a
profound connection to her mother; when Man Bobette escapes, Solitude continues to
hear her voice, proverbs of wisdom and strength. She is given to the master’s daughter as
a gift, and initially takes pleasure in being a good servant. After awhile, she becomes
agitated with her position and begins to have wicked thoughts about any harm she can
bring upon the master’s plantation. “Jamais jusque-là, jamais elle ne s’était sentie aussi
proche du secret de Man Bobette. Et tandis qu’elle allait et venait, dans la grande case,
toutes sortes de phrases à secret s’élevaient comme des étoiles filantes dans son cerveau”
(66). The disdain she develops for the the white man’s world connects her to Man
Bobette, more so than when they were physically together. She begins to her the familiar
voice of Man Bobette who tells her: “Pays de blanc, pays de la folie” (66). Solitude is not
at home in the world of the whites, and she identifies with the presence of Man Bobette;
“la voix âpre de Man Bobette lui murmuraient en consolation: Ma chère, toute flèche dont
tu sais qu’elle ne te manquera pas, fais seulement bien saillir ton ventre, qu’elle y frappe
en plein” (67). Man Bobette was the reincarnation of her grandmother in Africa.
Although Solitude never expresses that her unborn child is the reincarnation of Man
Bobette, the reader can assume that the matrilineage remains in tact, and that the child
represents an important connection between mother and daughter. It is another reason
why Solitude finds identity in her role as a mother. At the end of the novel, on the way to
her execution, Solitude stops at the fountain where prisoners take their last drink. As she
leans towards the fountain, a small branch falls at her feet, an herb called Baby Jesus that
is offered to new mothers. She searches the crowd of white faces, questioning who may
have made such a gesture. “Mais au milieu de la foule, et comme dressée sur ses ergots, une énorme négresse à madras pervenche la fixait de ses petits yeux ronds, étincelants de haine, semblait-il” (136). In a symbolic gesture, Solitude refuses to drink from the fountain and sings as she is executed. The reader does not really know if Man Bobette spoke to Solitude, and whether the négresse at the end is actually Man Bobette. Whether or not it is Man Bobette, or merely her presence that Solitude can never truly separate herself from, the strength that persists through Solitude is a result of her connection with Man Bobette.

In Moi, Tituba, Sorcière..., Tituba’s mother Abena, and Man Yaya, the sorceress who raised Tituba after her mother’s death are always present in the novel. Man Yaya is an old woman and is a grandmother figure to Tituba. As did Solitude and Télumée’s mother and grandmothers, Tituba’s mother and grandmother give Tituba strength in her trials through life. They are present almost daily in her life in Barbados, but they are rooted in the land. They are unable to leave Barbados and cross the ocean to come to Tituba’s aid. When Parris’ youngest daughter, whom she cared for, first accuses her of witchcraft she is devastated. John Indien rudely asks her, “Te souviens-tu que tu es la fille d’Abena?” (“Moi, Tituba, Sorcière...” 119). This question brings Tituba back to herself. She is strong because she is Abena’s daughter.

In her greatest moment of distress, she explains: “J’avais besoin d’elles. Je n’avais plus ma terre. Je n’avais que mon homme. J’avais dû tuer mon enfant. Alors, j’avais besoin d’elles” (135). Apart from Barbados, her connection with her mother and grandmother is her only link to the land she loves, the land that gives her happiness and
strength. She steals a sheep and performs a special ritual of sacrifice, and Abena, Man Yaya and Yao appear. Man Yaya comforts her:

Ne t’affole pas, Tituba! Tu le sais, la déveine, c’est la sœur jumelle du nègre! Elle naît avec lui, elle se couche avec lui, elle lui dispute le même sein flétri. Elle mange la morue de son cuit. Pourtant, il résiste, le nègre! Et ceux qui veulent disparaître de la surface de la terre, en seront pour leurs frais. De tous, tu seras la seule à survivre! (135).

Tituba is the only one to truly survive the ordeal, and eventually returns home to Barbados. At first, she spends her time in a maroon colony, but soon abandons it for her shack that she finds more or less the same. While at the maroon colony, the ever sexual Tituba becomes pregnant with the leader’s child. She has no intention of seeing him again, but is joyful that she will finally have a daughter, under happier conditions. “Tous mes actes désormais furent déterminés par cette vie que je portais en moi […] C’était une fille, j’en étais sûre!” (243). As the slaves prepare a grand revolt at the end of the novel, Tituba’s thoughts are for her daughter. Tituba sees her daughter’s life as what will be a continuation of her own. She says that her daughter would continue to fight against the injustices of life: “Elle me vengerait, ma fille!” (256). Sadly, Tituba is executed before she gives birth to her child. Tituba departs from the world of the living, but her story continues after her death. Because she dies before giving birth, the spirits authorize her to choose a daughter. “Enfant, que je n’ai pas portée, mais que j’ai désignée! Quelle maternité plus haute!” (270). In death, Tituba appears to her daughter and shares the mysteries of life and sorcery with her, perpetuating herself, her legacy. Tituba also shares
her strength with slaves in distress. She whispers to them: “Regarde la splendeur de notre terre. Bientôt, elle sera toute à nous. Champs d’orties et de cannes à sucre. Buttes d’ignames et carreaux de manioc. Toute!” (272). Tituba is a constant source of hope and strength, like her mother and grandmother were to her. At the end of the novel, the reader has the sense that this matrilineal strength will continue, without end, for the people of Barbados. The cyclical narratives within the novels present the birth, death, and rebirth of Caribbean women. Their capacity for eternal perpetuation is paralleled with the Caribbean landscape.

**Landscape, Religion and the Supernatural**

As stated, the Caribbean is an amalgamation of many transplanted cultures and religions. The authority of the supernatural is often an echo of African and Creole religions that have developed as a result of religious and cultural fragmentation. In *Creole Religions of the Caribbean*, Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert explain that the diasporic condition, which they call fundamentally Caribbean, “is today a global concern, linking, through the encounters of peoples and cultures engaged in transitional movement, the ongoing (re)construction of identities that is itself a form of global creolization. Religion is one of the crucial elements of that ongoing process for peoples of the Caribbean” (viii). In the present society of the Caribbean, 84% of 23,809,622 respondents in a 2009 survey by the Segmental Information System for Caribbean-guide.info reportedly practice a Christian religion (59% Catholic, 25% Protestant). Less than 2% practice East Indian religions (Hinduism, Judaism and Islam), and nearly 15% report that they actively practice religions which fall into the category of
"other". Nearly 15% practice a religion that is considered by the Western world as the Other. Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert identify the four most common Creole religions and spiritual practices (those considered "other") in the Caribbean as Voudou, Santería, Obeah and Espiritismo (3). Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert explain that Caribbean Creole religions developed as a result of cultural contact, part of the complex concept of creolization emblematic of diasporic cultures. The result of creolization in the field of religion led to the creation of religious systems and healing practices that allowed enslaved Africans communities to preserve a sense of personal and individual identity in their new Caribbean space. "The flexibility, eclecticism, and malleability of African religions allowed practitioners to adapt to their new environments, drawing spiritual power from wherever it originated" (Olmos, Paravisini-Gebert 3). Despite Christianity's substantial influence in the Caribbean, the supernatural and African religious influences are not entirely absent from those who practice a European faith. In her discussion of Christianity in the Caribbean in Parole des Femmes, Maryse Condé explains: "L'Antillais, si catéchisé qu'il soit, garde au fond de lui le besoin d'un approche du surnaturel qui ne soit pas celle qu'édicté la religion officielle" (49). African and subsequent Creole religions have always been, and continue to be present and active in Caribbean culture and literature.

At first glance, the supernatural world appears to be detached from the surrounding physical environment. However, it has an inconspicuous but very particular connection with the landscape. At the very base of this complex connection is religion. Slavery transplanted multitudes of Africans to the Caribbean landscape and each individual belonged to one of innumerable cultures, spoke one of many languages, and
practiced one of countless religions. None of these cultures, languages or religions was acceptable in French colonies. In *Moi, Tituba, Sorcière*, Tituba asks: “Quel était ce monde qui avait fait de moi une esclave, une orpheline, une paria? Quel était ce monde qui me séparait des miens ? Qui m’obligeait à vivre parmi gens qui ne parlaient pas ma langue, qui ne partageaient pas ma religion, dans un pays malgracieux, peu avenant ?” (“Moi, Tituba, Sorcière” 82). Similarly, in *Mulâtr esse Solitude*, Bayangumay is the only Diola crowded in the bottom of the boat carrying African peoples from Gorée to Guadeloupe to become slaves. She is completely alone in her beliefs, her culture and language. She expresses this when she calls out, announcing her name in her native language to anyone that may respond. “Elle attendit un long moment, quêtant un mot de sa langue natale dans le déferlement de plaintes et de cris étrangers” (“Mulâtr esse Solitude” 39). Several times, she is only answered by silence. She cries out in distress, “Diolas, Diolas, n’y a-t-il pas un seul Diola dans ce poisson ? ” (39). Bayangumay does not receive a response, and soon after she tries to swallow her own tongue. This gesture is symbolic of the great psychological burden that cultural isolation impresses upon human beings.

The French language was forced upon slaves by necessity of a means of communication; the very institution of slavery and the plantation system imposed French culture upon slaves as well. Slaves were unable to escape their social role in French culture and were legally bound to their echelon in French culture by the Black Code. Included in this imposition of French culture was above all French religion, Roman Catholicism. The Black Code explicitly prohibited the practice of any religion other than Roman Catholicism, as the third article explicitly stated: “Interdisons tout exercice public
d’autre religion que de la catholique, apostolique et romaine; voulons nous que les contrevenants soient punis comme rebelles et désobéissants à nos commandements” (13).

In addition, slaves were compelled to uphold certain Catholic practices: slaves were forced to be baptized in the Catholic religion, only Catholic marriages were recognized, and all (and only) Catholic holidays were observed. Slaves were prohibited from practicing their native religions, which were intimately connected with the landscape: for the Creole and African religions presented in *Mulâtresse Solitude*, *Moi, Tituba*, *Sorcière*..., and *Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle*, men and women were born of the earth and returned to the earth in death, if only temporarily. The landscape played a very important role in African religion, as the earth was the giver of life and the bringer of death.

Christianity contrasts from African and Creole religions in the value and authority it attributes to the landscape. For African religions, the land was spiritual and their gods were present in it. In her examination of religion and the supernatural in Caribbean literature, Condé cites the writings of Lucien Peytraud, titled *L’esclavage aux Antilles françaises avant 1789*, in discussion of the fetishism of Africans. Peytraud asserts that the dominant characteristic of the black race was fetishism:

…c’est-à-dire qu’à leurs yeux, tout est dieu, tout est animé d’une vie et d’une volonté tout peut exercer une action sur l’univers […] là, c’est un animal, un léopard, un crocodile, un serpent; ici, c’est un arbre, une pierre, un rocher; ailleurs c’est un lac, un rivièr, la mer, la lune la voûte céleste (“La Parole des Femmes” 48).
Animism and terrestrial spiritual connection, as well as reincarnation, were African religious values. This starkly contrasted with Catholicism and Christianity of French colonizers. In his *The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis*, Lynn White examines the relationship between Christianity and the environment. The most striking differences between Christianity and other world religions are its story of creation and its notion of time as non-repetitive and linear. White criticizes the anthropocentricity of Christianity because it reveres a God who, in a matter of days, created the earth and all its plants and animals for his greatest creation, Man, whom he created in his image. “Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man’s benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man’s purposes” (White 1205). The Christian idea of creation contrasts with Creole religion, as presented in *Pluie et Vent Sur Télumée Miracle*, for example. Toussine tells young Télumée and Élie the story of creation, that God created the earth and dressed it with humans. However, she tells them, God was miserable apart from his creations, and returned to the earth to be a part of it: “Il vit des contrées que l’œil humain n’a jamais contemplees, des étangs couverts de fleurs rares, mais il pensait à l’homme...” (“Pluie et Vent” 78). African and Creole religions embrace the landscape that God(s) created and they respect their presence in it. Conversely, the Western view of nature devalues the landscape, because it only finds use in the exploitation of its resources.

Despite Christianity’s presence in the French Caribbean, the entirely Western concept that nature exists solely for man’s benefit does not penetrate the Antillean soul. In *La Parole des Femmes*, Maryse Condé explains that the interaction with the supernatural is misinterpreted as an element of exoticism drawn from the Caribbean
landscape. Condé argues that the supernatural can function as a literary tool which rebuilds a narrative, a means of restitution. Speaking of the latter, Condé explains:

“Quand cela serait, cela traduirait l’importance des pratiques qualifiées de magiques dans la vie et la réalité des iles” (53). The usage of the supernatural in Caribbean literature functions as a tool for writers to reinvent stories and add depth to characters by literally plunging beneath the surface and extending beyond reality to present a complex and truly Caribbean portrayal. The supernatural and the world it opens create an intimate link between the landscape and the Caribbean soul. The supernatural is authoritative for the heroines of Mulâtresse Solitude, Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle, and Moi, Tituba, sorcière in their regeneration despite the destitution in which they find themselves.

Unlike Télumée and Tituba, Solitude does not actively practice sorcery. However, Solitude’s torment is endured physically and psychologically and is manifested in supernatural ways. As a “pet” for the master’s daughter, Solitude begins to commit small, wicked acts, like pouring fresh manioc juice into the chickens’ feeding trough. She is filled with a sense of satisfaction and a sense of rebellion when they all die in agony. Then she begins to worry about changing into something nonhuman. “Cependant, elle craignait maintenant de devenir autre, elle le craignait et le désirait,... mais surtout le craignait atrocement: quelque chose de terrifiant, un chien, par exemple, comme on dit que certaines personnes mauvaises tournent” (Mulâtresse Solitude 73). Solitude becomes obsessed with her fear of becoming a dog, chased, tortured, and beaten, and she starts to bark in her sleep at night. She is sent to sleep on a mat in an old sugar mill behind the master’s house. She spent her time alone, in shadows, and “des heures durant, dans l’ombre qui s’épaississait et puis gagnait son coeur- l’invitant subtilement aux
métamorphoses...” (73). Soon after, Solitude becomes a zombie. The narrator explains to the reader that a zombie was a body from which the soul had departed:

Il y avait alors un grande variété d’Ombres dans les îles à sucre: nègres morts animés par la magie, nègres vivants qui avaient chu dans un corps de bête, et d’autres, d’autres encore, dont l’âme était partie on ne savait où. Ces derniers portaient habituellement le nom de zombi-cornes (74).

Her masters sell her, and the narrator tells the reader that her years as a zombie are obscure and their chronicle is uncertain. Each time she is purchased, she is quickly re-sold because her master comes to believe she is a body without a soul.

In Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle, Toussine turns to the supernatural to communicate with her husband after he dies. She moves to Fond-Zombi and befriends an old sorceress, Man Cia. Télumée asks Toussine about Man Cia, wondering if she can really change into animals like the children of the village have told her. Toussine replies:

... certes, man Cia ne se contente pas de la forme humaine que le bon Dieu lui a donné, elle a le pouvoir de se transformer en n’importe quel animal... et qui sait, peut-être est-elle cette fourmi qui court sur ton cou, écoutant le mal que tu dis d’elle?... […] Enfin, vérité, man Cia est une femme de bien mais il ne faut pas lui chauffer les oreilles (“Pluie et Vent” 56).

Télumée becomes fascinated with the supernatural as a young girl. “De même, j’étais toujours intéressée lorsque les hommes se mettaient à parler d’esprits, de sortilèges, du compère qu’on avait vu courir en chien” (55). As an adult, after Toussine’s death, Man
Cia passes on her gifts and knowledge of the supernatural to Telumée. After separating from her husband and burying her grandmother, Telumée has a symbolic rebirth when she moves to La Folie and studies the landscape and its magic with Man Cia: “… nous nous promenions dans la forêt où man Cia m’initiait aux secrets des plantes. Elle m’apprenait également le corps humain, ses noeuds et ses faiblesses, comment le frotter, chasser malaises et crispations, démissions” (190). Telumée becomes intimately familiar with the forest and its supernatural secrets and uses her gifts to heal and comfort the villagers of Fond-Zombi and La Folie.

In Moi, Tituba, Sorcière..., Tituba actively practices witchcraft throughout the novel, as the title suggests. Man Yaya shares her practice with Tituba as a young girl, and after Man Yaya’s death, Tituba continues to practice and augment her gift. Tituba considers her supernatural powers a gift of nature. “La faculté de communiquer avec les invisibles, de garder un lien constant avec les disparus, de soigner, de guérir n’est-elle pas une grâce supérieure de nature à inspirer respect, admiration et gratitude? ” (“Moi, Tituba, Sorcière…” 34). Her religious views vehemently conflict with the beliefs of her first Christian owner, Susanna Endicott, and Tituba has great difficulty understanding the religion of her masters. When she first becomes a slave to live with John Indien, she is forced to learn the Christian faith and recite its prayers. While John Indien is teaching her about Christianity, she asks: “Comment le monde a été créé au septième jour? Comment notre père Adam a été précipité du paradis terrestre par la faute de notre mère Eve… ” (35). When Samuel Parris purchases Tituba and John Indien, she faces greater struggles with the puritan community. On the eve of her first night on the boat to America, Samuel Parris forces Tituba and John Indien to pray with his family. “Il est certain que la couleur
Tituba’s love for the natural world is stifled by Samuel Parris and Puritanism’s religious impositions. She tells the Parris children and their friends stories from her native Barbados, and Élizabeth begs her to stop for fear that it may cause them to dream. Tituba does not understand, and asks herself, “Pourquoi le rêve ne serait-il pas bon? N’est-il pas meilleur que la réalité? ” (72). Tituba is also bewildered at the puritan family’s fear of cats. For Tituba, animals can be departed souls that interact with the living, but they do not instigate fear or malice. When the Parris’ encounter a black cat in their home, Tituba tells the reader: “Je ne saurais décrire l’effet que ce malheureux chat noir produisit sur les enfants aussi bien que sur Élizabeth et Samuel Parris. Ce dernier se précipita sur son livre de prières et se mit à réciter une interminable oraison” (74). Although she only uses her supernatural gifts to heal Élizabeth Parris and her daughter, Betsy, Tituba is persecuted for the stories she tells the children. She is accused of cooperating with Satan, bringing evil to the community of Salem. For Tituba, who takes pride in being Tituba, Sorcière, the supernatural is her vocation. Although it causes persecution, it is a source of strength; it is a connection she maintains with her life in Barbados throughout her struggles in America. The contrast between Tituba’s supernatural powers and puritan Christianity mirrors Tituba’s intimate connection with the Caribbean landscape and detachment with the American environment. The echoes of African religion in the Caribbean continue to venerate the natural and supernatural elements of the landscape.

Life and Death in Caribbean Literature
Life and death are important themes in Mulâtresse Solitude, Moi, Tituba, Sorcière..., and Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle. Reincarnation and interaction with the dead are presented in all three novels. For African slaves in the Caribbean, death was celebrated; it was a return to Africa. “La mort a toujours occupé une grande place dans la société antillaise [...] Naturelle, elle est accueillie avec joie, car elle symbolise non pas le départ vers l’au-delà, mais le retour” (“La Parole des Femmes” 70). African religions venerate the eternal presence and ephemeral absence of departed souls. In contrast, Christianity does not sanction an intimate relationship with the landscape, because it is almost entirely absent from the human experiences of life and death. Maryse Condé explains:

Dans la majorité des sociétés africaines, la mort n’est pas un terme, mais un passage [...] Les funérailles sont des gestes de vivants qui facilitent la métamorphose du disparu en Ancêtre qui, dès lors, invisible, ne quittera plus les humains et participera à leur vie. Aux Antilles, il reste de larges pans d’une telle croyance (71).

One is born of the earth, returns to the earth, and remains with the earth. An example of such African beliefs can be found in Souffles, one of African poet Birago Diop’s contributions in Senghor’s Anthologie de la Nouvelle Poésie Nègre:

Ceux qui sont morts ne sont jamais partis
ils sont dans l’ombre qui s’éclaire
et dans l’ombre qui s’épaissit
les morts ne sont pas sous la terre:
ils sont dans l’arbre qui frémît,
ils sont dans le bois qui gémit.
ils sont dans l’eau qui coule,
ils sont dans l’eau qui dort,
ils sont dans la cave, ils sont dans la foule :
les morts ne sont pas morts (145).

Similar beliefs are presented in Mulâtresse Solitude. Solitude’s mother Bayangumay belongs to a society of matrilineal reincarnation. This connection between the living and the dead perpetuates in Caribbean theology. “Cette idée, d’abord africaine, demeure profondément antillaise. A travers toutes les pratiques magiques, les morts restent non loin des vivants” (“La Parole des Femmes” 55). In Moi, Tituba, Sorcière... and Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle, African-derived beliefs of reincarnation and life in death are more intimately connected with the Caribbean for Télumée and Tituba. As Toussine was able to stay in contact with her late husband, she too is an active presence for Télumée after death. Similarly, Tituba is visited by the spirits of her mother and grandmother. The novels portray the soul as unconstrained by a linear timescale, free to operate in an inherently non-linear, cyclical fashion that transcends time and space.

In Mulâtresse Solitude, the African Diola people are buried three feet below the surface three days after their funeral, and they are bestowed with gifts and offerings from their living relatives, and in exchange, they encourage plants to grow through their roots to provide food for the community. Once they are well-rested, they ascend through the roots of the tree, and through small lizards their souls enter a passing woman.
In the novel, African slaves believe that death is their only means of return. Solitude describes her mother’s friend, an old slave whose leg was amputated after an attempt at marooning. She overhears her mother and the old man talking one night about leaving, about a boat. Solitude’s mother asks the old man, “Et puis, d’ailleurs, quel est ce bateau?” (55). The old man responds to her: “La mort est ce bateau” (55). The African faith in life after death and the perpetuation of the soul promise liberation and rebirth.

In Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle, death no longer symbolizes a return to Africa, but the African belief of life after death is present and active. After her husband’s death, Toussine seeks Man Cia’s help to contact him; Man Cia “cotoyait les morts plus que les vivants” (“Pluie et Vent” 55). The characters in the novel are not slaves, and death is not seen as liberation from slavery. However, it is regarded as deliverance from the hardships of life. In the saloon at Fond-Zombi, death is a subject of discussion among the villagers. One man, Ti Paille, explains: “...mais je dis que le nègre mérite la mort pour vivre comme il vit... et n’est-ce pas la mort que nous méritons, mes frères?” (54). For the people of Fond-Zombi, death is comfort. When Télumée is suffering at the hands of her abusive husband, Toussine reassures her that life is only temporary. She offers consolation in death: “Quand ton heure sera venue, tu verras tes dents tomber en songe,
tu verras ton corps et ton linge filer dans la rivière et tu te retrouveras dans un pays
inconnu, avec des arbres et des fleurs que tu n'as jamais vus: ne te fie à aucun autre rêve
que celui-là” (59). In Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle, death does not warrant
departure from the earth but forges a more intimate connection between individual and
landscape:

Et si nous autres, nègres des Fonds perdus, vénérions nos morts neuf jours durant,
c'est pour que l’âme de la personne défunte ne subisse aucune brusquerie, qu’elle
se détache progressivement de son coin de terre, de sa chaise, de son arbre préféré,
du visage de ses amis avant d’aller contempler la face cachée du soleil (183).

At the end of her life, an aged Télumée tells the reader that she has finally found solace,
surviving its ordeals and patiently awaiting death. She begins the story of her life, telling
the reader of the happiness she has come to find: “...je préfère rêver, encore et encore,
debout au milieu de mon jardin, comme le font toutes les vieilles de mon âge, jusqu’à ce
que la mort me prenne dans mon rêve, avec toute ma joie...” (11). For Télumée, the life
will persist after death. She will continue to communicate with people of Fond-Zombi,
and she will be free to become her favorite tree or flower. She will be free of life’s
ordeals, its rain and its wind.

For Tituba, the interaction of the world of the living and the world of the dead is
extremely significant. When her mother Abena is hanged and her adoptive father
commits suicide, Man Yaya teaches Tituba that they are not really gone. Abena’s
contempt for Tituba does not follow her in death, and she apologizes for the hostility she
felt when she was alive. “Pardonne-moi d’avoir cru que je ne t’aimais pas! À présent, je
vois clair en moi et je ne te quitterai jamais! ” (“Moi, Tituba, Sorcière…” 22). She is able to appear before Tituba and promises to be with her always. When Man Yaya dies, Tituba does not mourn her death. She acknowledges that “son corps subit la loi de l’espèce […] Je ne pleurai pas en la mettant en terre. Je savais que je n’étais pas seule et que trois ombres se relayaient autour de moi pour veiller” (23). Before falling in love with John Indien, Tituba is happy to be alone in the woods. She tells the reader she was never alone; her mother, Man Yaya and Yao were with her always. She explains: “Les morts ne meurent que s’ils meurent dans nos cœurs” (23). For the characters in Tituba’s world, “…la mort n’est qu’une porte que les initiés savent tenir grande ouverte” (75). Her family and Hester Prynne come and go in death as they please. After being acquitted of her crimes, Tituba is purchased by a Jewish merchant, Benjamin Cohen d’Azevedo. Benjamin’s wife and youngest children had died of cholera, and Tituba went to work for him and his nine children in Boston. Tituba was moved by his sadness, and used her supernatural powers to reunite husband and late wife. Benjamin is forever grateful and Tituba enjoys her time with him; they relate to one another through mutual persecution from the puritan community. The Puritans eventually set fire to Benjamin’s house, and the rest of his nine sons and daughters are killed. After this tragedy, he frees Tituba and pays for her to return to her native Barbados. Before her departure, she reunites father and family one last time. His children tell him: “Hâte-toi, père. En vérité, la mort est le plus grand des bienfaits” (209). Tituba is able to communicate between the two worlds that very actively interact with one another throughout the novel.

As Tituba is killed pregnant, she is able to choose a child she can mentor. She visits her daughter at night and teaches her the mysteries and secrets of life. At the point
of Tituba’s death, she stops narrating her story in the past and begins narrating the present: “Mon histoire véritable commence où celle-là finit et n’aura pas de fin” (267). The reader is left knowing that in death, Tituba’s life is far from over. She is content as a spirit in Barbados, hiding in a mango tree, dropping fruit at the feet of slaves that sing songs about her. At the end of the novel, through death she becomes eternally connected to her beloved landscape. Death is rebirth, regeneration, and new life.
CONCLUSION: HER VOICE MUST BE HEARD

Women in Caribbean literature effectively embrace a positive, truly Caribbean identity which gives voice to their heroic presence that long remained absent from Western historiography. Caribbean women’s intimate correlation with the landscape unites them with their land, dispelling the “nonhistory” that resulted from African diaspora and mass cultural transplantation. The native Caribbean landscape is crucial because it allows the female protagonists in Mulâtresse Solitude, Moi, Tituba, Sorcière..., and Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle to mimic the growth of the rhizome: to grow stronger through adversity, to regenerate through disconnection.

This thesis has attempted to reclaim a discourse of Caribbean literature that has so far mainly been dominated by the male voice. Through highlighting the importance of the female voice in the quest for an authentic, Caribbean identity, the study intended to prove that landscape is not just an exotic element of Caribbean literature, but an active character with a vital role in the reclamation of fragmented, stolen histories. From the aftermath of colonialism and slavery, positive and truly Caribbean histories are being excavated and find regeneration through recollection. While the volatile past of the Caribbean islands cannot be rewritten, the voices that emerge from Caribbean literature can change the world view of Caribbean history. Reclaimed identities in Caribbean literature regenerate positive cultural features from historical disarray.

In its examination of Mulâtresse Solitude, Moi, Tituba, Sorcière..., and Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle, this thesis provides a unique perspective of the landscape,
women, and their authority in Caribbean literature. It is my hope that future research will continue to consider the distinct and significant contribution that female authors and female voices make in Caribbean literature. “Ah, une femme comme ça, c’est haut comme un pays” (“Pluie et Vent” 208).
Bibliography


http://caribbean-guide.info/past.and.present/religion/
