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# Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance, by Celia Britton

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ne me suis jamais vraiment intégrée au pays. J'étais marginale, on me rejetait. Longtemps j'ai traité les Haïtiens de zombis et maintenant je suis devenue plus zombie qu'eux! Pour moi c'étaient des zombis parce qu'ils ne vivaient pas réellement" (68). And who can forget Fanon's remarginalization, or re-ghettoization of Mayotte Capécia in *Peau noire, masques blancs* because of her presumed racial alienation? As Ilona Johnson and Christiane Makward point out, "Fanon est incapable d'appliquer ces considérations [sa profession de foi socialiste et son analyse de facteurs économiques comme terreau même du sentiment d'infériorité lié à la couleur] à la condition féminine. Pas plus qu'un Camus ou un Malraux, il n'a pris le temps de méditer *Le Deuxième Sexe* qui venait de paraître" (315).

Undoubtedly, the articles in this collection make an important contribution to the fields of Caribbean and women's studies. Perhaps the collection's greatest contribution lies, however, in its role as catalyst for future full-length studies of all of these writers. They deserve more than the ten to fifteen pages allotted to them in this collection. The contributors realize this and have begun to recenter these writers in a more complete manner, as evidenced by the recent publication of *Mayotte Capécia, ou l'aliénation selon Fanon* (Karthala, 1999), by Christiane Makward.

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BRITTON, CELIA. *Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance*. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1999. ISBN 0-8139-1848-0. Pp. 256. \$55.

Postcolonial theory has developed mainly in the US, Britain, and Australia; it is written in English. Apart from Fanon, writers and intellectuals of the French Caribbean are largely ignored. Celia Britton remedies this unfortunate omission in discussing in depth, and in English, the theoretical and fictional works of Edouard Glissant, undoubtedly one of the most important theorists and writers of the Caribbean. Leaving his poetry aside, Britton sets out to discuss Glissant's novels in relation to his own theory as well as to Anglophone (Bhabba, Gates, Spivak), Francophone (Deleuze and Guattari, de Certeau, Derrida), and Hispanophone (Benítez-Rojo) postcolonial theory. Structured thematically, Britton's book revolves around the central question of language and its role in resisting colonial domination.

In the first chapter, Britton defines the four key concepts most relevant to the question of language and resistance in Glissant's body of essays (mainly *Le Discours antillais*, *Poétique de la relation*, and *Traité du tout-monde*) and to which she refers regularly in her subsequent chapters. These are *relation*, *opacité*, *détour*, and *contrepoétique*. Relation is an ever-changing, ever-diversifying process of relations of races and cultures creating the positive value of *métissage*. Associated with this proliferating process are diversity and *chaos-monde*, i.e., the unpredictable dynamic of mixture of cultures. Intimately connected to relation is the respect for the Other's difference in its density and opacity. This means that no truth can apply universally and permanently. As for *détour*, it is an indirect mode of resistance which is tactical and ambiguous as it arises as a response to a situation of disguised oppression. The ruses of Creole, simultaneously expressing and hiding its meaning, are a perfect example of this concept. Finally, counterpoetics works as a response to the lack of a natural authentic language; it is a form of *détour*. It acts by contesting the French language from within, that is, by mocking it, transgressing its rules, subverting its meaning.

Within this conceptual framework, Britton begins with a reading of *Malemort* and *La Case du commandeur*. In these novels, language is experienced as repression; it is a "lack," an impossibility of articulating emotions and insights. The author parallels Glissant's description of language inadequacies, especially in connection with the repression of history, with Spivak's metaphorically "silent subaltern." In the light of Spivak's theorization of subalternity, the author proceeds to discuss the representation of characters in *Le Quatrième Siècle* and *Mahagony*, or more accurately, "the *unrepresentability* of day-to-day subaltern slave consciousness" (64). Thus, Britton moves on to the language of the white Other (*béké* or Metropolitan French) which is for black Martinicans an object of desire and identification. This *pulsion mimétique*, already analyzed by Fanon, reflects an insidious violence which leads Glissant's fictional characters to madness and delirium. However, if the mimetic drive is destructive, delirious language can be used as a technique of cultural survival—another detour—to the dislocations and contradictions of Martinican society. Britton links this linguistic strategy to a condition Bhabba calls "unhomeliness" and which she found expressed in Glissant's novels (including *Tout-monde*) through the collective repression of the traumatic past and the uncovering of the repressed. Moreover, detour can take the form of a conscious ruse. Language disguises its meanings by communicating indirectly through irrelevant digressions, withheld information or nonlinear narration. This "camouflaged language" is a form of delaying tactic, the *parole différée*. Finally, Britton discusses a strategy of nonhierarchical diversity, "relayed language," which operates against monologic authority (Bakhtin) and the language-identity equation. Similar to Spivak's analysis of "rumor," delayed language is a proliferating, "rhizomatic force" that extends across time and space, an ever-changing *trame* or collective intertext.

Britton's book is remarkably well-written, lucid, and insightful. Her conclusion thoroughly wraps up her analysis of Glissant's challenging theoretical work and complex fiction. Her book will enlighten scholars of postcolonial issues.

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BOURAOU, HÉDI, éd. *Tunisie Plurielle*. Actes du colloque international de l'université York (Toronto, Canada), avril 1995. Vol. 1. Tunisie: L'Or du temps, 1997. ISBN 9973-757-36-X. Pp. 330. 180 F.

Le premier volume des actes du colloque *Tunisie Plurielle* se divise en trois sections: textes de création, communications et témoignages. A une excellente préface de Hédi Bouraoui, succèdent trois beaux textes de création par trois auteurs tunisiens: Albert Memmi, Moncef Ghachem et Méjîd El-Houssi.

La seconde partie contient 24 communications de longueur et de qualité variées. La première, de Hédi Bouraoui, souligne avec pertinence l'aspect transculturel et la pluraité de la civilisation tunisienne. Mansour M'Henni examine la présence du français en Tunisie dans les domaines de l'enseignement et de la littérature. Robert Elbaz donne une analyse théorique savante du roman maghrébin et de l'impossibilité de retrouver l'histoire. Elbaz compare également l'écriture maghrébine aux sables du désert "assumant sans cesse de nouvelles formes dans une fluidité caractéristique qui rappelle la narration et ses diverses variations" (9). Guy Degas rapproche aux études littéraires maghrébines d'avoir occulté la variété et la continuité