ABSTRACT

The Novels of Patrick Chamoiseau and the Creole Town

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Identity and acceptance of the ‘pays natal’ (birth-place/-space) have always been complex, if not problematic, issues in France’s Overseas Department called Martinique.

Immediately preceding and consequent to that Caribbean island’s ‘irruption into modernity’¹ in the 1940s, a number of attempts were made to define its position in the world as well as its ‘mediating contexts’². The Afrocentric ideology of Négritude - as proposed by Aimé Césaire - linked Martinique to the African space, and Antillanité (Caribbeanness) - the Caribcentric poetics associated with Edouard Glissant - insists on Martinique’s Caribbean place or space in ‘the other America’. Créolité (Creoleness) - the

¹ Term used by Glissant in Le discours antillais
² Milan, Kundera, 1991, p. 48
movement of the 80s and 90s - espouses cultural syncretism in its multicultural orientation and focuses on the actual Martinican space.

Patrick Chamoiseau, often described as the *chantre de la Créolité* 

3, does more than insist on the fact that in identitarian terms Martinicans are part of a rainbow coalition of Creoles. His novels, like Baudelaire’s works, focus on the urban space, presenting Fort-de-France in a more positive way than his predecessors (Césaire, Zobel, Fanon and Glissant to a lesser extent). His literary success suggests a creolization of the French publishing sphere and his political stance seems to demand the creolization of the country’s political landscape through ‘works of the imagination’.

A reflection on the evolution of the definition of Martinican identity in relation to space and a detailed exploration of Chamoiseau’s presentation of the creolization of the interlectal/liminal urban space to yield ‘*une ville créole*’ in Martinique’s capital are the aims of this paper.

**Keywords:** Vivette Ruth Milson; Patrick Chamoiseau; Créolité; interlectal/liminal space; *ville créole*.

3 So called by Térèz Leotin, one of the female associates of the movement, in a talk on Créolité: “Dialogue avec la Créolité - Bilan et Perspectives” in the *Amphithéâtre Frantz Fanon* on the Schoelcher Campus, mercredi 11 juin 1997.