

## 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'<sup>1</sup> in the 1940s, a number of attempts were made to define its position in the world as well as its 'mediating contexts'<sup>2</sup>. The Afrocentric ideology of *Négritude* - as proposed by Aimé Césaire - linked Martinique to the African space, and *Antillanité* (Caribbeanness) - the Carib-centric poetics associated with Edouard Glissant - insists on Martinique's Caribbean place or space in 'the other America'. *Créolité* (Creoleness) - the

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<sup>1</sup> Term used by Glissant in *Le discours antillais*

<sup>2</sup> 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*'<sup>3</sup>, 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*.