The Slave's *Jouissance*

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For all intents and purposes, Édouard Glissant is looking for an "elsewhere" of Hegelian dialectics; one can even posit that his entire thought is a response to Hegel that forcefully tries to go beyond all the important Hegelian themes: History conceived as one and universal, absolute knowledge, the master-slave dialectics as sole principle of explanation of human history are at every point in Glissant's work contradicted by his own propositions.[1]

However (or therefore), Hegel is very much a presence in Glissant's work, from the very beginning of his career as an essayist. In *L'intention poétique*, Hegel is shown as exempting African history from his "universal" history. Glissant intends to fill this silence, not accomplish a "revenge" on Hegel or for the "impish pleasure of contradicting him" but to "instantaneously recover those enormous and silent spaces where [my] history went astray" (*L'intention poétique* 37, 38).[2] Paradoxically, Glissant criticizes Hegel for not being universal and systematic *enough*. The erasure of African history not only invalidates Hegel's claim to universality, but indicates a lack in the system. In 1969 already, we see in Glissant's negative criticism the incipient shadow of what will become the notion of the *Tout-monde*; maybe Glissant is after all a much more systematic thinker than he says. Maybe, also, the *Tout-monde* and the Relation poetics will be a manner of *completing* Hegel. These remarks indicate both the importance of Hegel for Glissant and the complexity of his relation to the German philosopher; this relation will not be of retribution or contradiction, but an effort to write, to create what Hegel left unsaid. Hegel is still present in 1990 in *La Poétique de la Relation*. Like Plato and the *griot*, he is mentioned to underline his local (contextual) opacity, and hence to relativize his concepts by tying them to a specific time and space (Glissant, *La Poétique de la Relation* 208). He makes a last appearance, to my knowledge, in *Une nouvelle région du monde*: while saluting his lucidity and thoroughness, Glissant stresses the German philosopher's blindness when he applies his system to the world-totality. "*Hegel can make a mistake*. . . . He has known history, he has acknowledged it, and history has remained invalid, without the memory of any remoteness that would be near" (*Une nouvelle région du monde* 152).

Hence, a brief detour through Hegel and his rereading by Kojève and Lacan[3] is necessary to set the stage for Glissant's reworking of the master-slave dialectics.

For Hegel, the master-slave dialectics is the key to an understanding of global human history.[4] The master's desire is to be recognized as master by the slave. In order to achieve that goal, he must coerce the slave's desire and channel it so that the slave grants him the acknowledgement of his master status. In other words, for Hegel, human desire always aims, not at an object, but another human being's desire (*Begierde*). Furthermore, the essential differentiation between the slave and the master is that the latter consents to

die to be recognized as master, whereas the slave refuses to die and thus has to submit. This mythical scenario of the beginnings of history means that the slave is the conveyer of humanity's future, because he has an interest in changing his condition; on the other hand, the master is essentially conservative, immobile, since any change to his status would mean his destruction. Closely following Kojève's introduction, Lacan makes two fundamental remarks on Hegel's scenario. First, the master's acceptance of death in the struggle to death between him and the slave is illogical: it kills the slave, whose recognition the master absolutely needs; hence the struggle for death is purely mental and verbal: both the master and the slave need only to think about it in order to make it effective. In other words, the slave's oppression is not founded on the struggle to death: only intimidation (that is, a verbal and psychic act) is necessary and sufficient in order for the master to establish himself as master (Lacan 365). Second, the Hegelian master forfeits his own *jouissance*; since he is acknowledged as such by a slave's consciousness, this recognition has no value for him: only recognition by another master would satiate his desire.[5] Indeed, the struggle for mastery is, in Hegel's terms, a struggle for "pure prestige," that is a struggle that is symbolic and cannot be resolved by the master's otiose consumption or destruction of the goods produced for him by the slave. The master's *jouissance* through the destruction or consumption of goods produced by the slave remains purely subjective.[6] If the master can be satisfied only by recognition, than he cannot be fulfilled. The symbolic *jouissance* of recognition is lost, and the master is in an impasse he has created for himself. The *jouissance* is therefore only on the side of the slave, and it is open to a future where the dialectics would be overturned to his advantage (Lacan 17, 115).

A further complication arises here: the master, being the incarnation of the superego itself, has no "interiority"; he does not need it, since all he has to do is manifest his mastery, intimidate, and repress. The slave or the knave, on the other hand, will interiorize the master's image; in other words, the master's superego will imbed itself in the slave's unconscious. This is why revolt is so hard, because one cannot completely erase an unconscious formation: it is bound to survive rebellion and come back when the slave has become the master; and this comeback, more often than not, takes up very unpleasant forms, as the history of revolutions (the French Terror, the Russian October, the Khmer Rouge) frequently proves.

This schematic overview would be incomplete if it didn't include Hegel's reading of events that happened in his own contemporariness and modified his own dialectics: namely, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire. The citizen is at the same time a master (he can aspire to be a ruler, since hereditary privileges have been suppressed by the Revolution; also, he takes up arms and goes to war) and a slave (he works): the worker-warrior of Napoleon's armies, as Kojève says. In such a world, otiose spending or prestige consumption are voided of their meaning. Post-revolutionary economics are marked by the accumulation of capital: in other words, the master has become in his turn slave to Capital; nowhere is the master's renunciation of immediate *jouissance* more obvious than in a capitalistic economy.[7] These are the Hegelian preconditions of the present Martinican, post-revolutionary and postcolonial, subject.

In Glissant's work, there are not many explicit representations of sexuality. Sexual acts in his novels are more often submitted to ellipses or euphemisms; they are also reinscribed in a larger context, for example, the slave's workforce reproduction for the benefit of the

Plantation master. Glissant once told me that he did not understand the contemporary obsession with sex, everywhere evident in our Society of the Spectacle.[8] This remark was not at all a symptom of prudishness: as we shall see below, Glissant is quite capable of writing about sex with a straightforward frankness; but sexual questions are not central to his vision: they are always subordinate to a larger context.

To this muting of sexuality, there is nevertheless a deliberate exception, where Glissant speaks in extremely blunt terms about sexuality in the Martinican context. It is a chapter in *Le Discours antillais* entitled "Inconscient, identité, méthodes," which is based on a lecture he gave at a colloquium in Bloomington, Indiana, in 1973.

Hegelian conceptuality is imbedded in Glissant's evaluation of postcolonial, post-slavery *jouissance* in the Martinican mode. But Glissant subtracts the Martinican dialectics from universal history, an implicit exit from Hegel's assumption. Indeed, the Martinican *jouissance* arises from the background of an erased history: the slave trade obliterates all traces of an African past, destroys traditional structures, and redefines the slave's being as a thing and a property. The trade also abolishes any structure of kinship. The function of the Name of the Father, of the law, hence the functions of desire, pleasure, and *jouissance* are usurped by the master himself, who demands that all desires be redirected to the profit of his own *jouissance*; the Oedipal structuration is obliterated.[9] In sum, the slave trade fabricates a tabula rasa from which all the past history of the individual and the community, including their sexual histories and practices, has been annihilated.

Second, on this void, slavery builds a specific mode of *jouissance*. The master enjoys the results of slave labor; he consumes them, destroys them for his own pleasure. Material (not symbolic, see above) *jouissance* is a privilege of his position and is denied to the slave, who, in this dialectics, is just a producing tool, including his/her sexual activity, which is considered only in respect to the reproduction of a slave workforce.

Third, the stage of the dialectics is also (one may say even primarily) linguistic for Glissant. Witness his numerous propositions on French (the master's tongue), Creole (the slave's tongue), and African languages (forgotten and erased by the slave trades); the drama and struggles of languages are for him a constitutive element of slavery.

Fourth, the slave's *jouissance*, which does not even exist in the master's eyes, was always a *stolen jouissance*. There is no place for it in the slave economy; it is invisible; it is embezzled from a time/space that in principle belongs entirely to the master. Hence, in its postcolonial avatar, Martinican *jouissance* will be hurried: *jouissance* will short-circuit pleasure, on both sides of the gender divide: "The Martiniquan doesn't take the time. In other words, he doesn't take pleasure" (Glissant, *Le Discours antillais* 296).[10]

Because of this temporal precipitation, Martinican *jouissance* is without object. The object of desire (women) disappears in the short-circuit: female *jouissance* has no importance per se; it functions only as recognition of the male *jouissance*: "The Martiniquan will demand the testimony of female jouissance, not as belonging to the woman, but as an endorsement of his own theft's legitimacy" (*Le Discours antillais* 295).

Fifth, Glissant ties the Martinican sexual *jouissance* to the consumption of goods. For example, through sexual tourism, the male Martinican is convinced that women come to Martinique for sexual consumption. In ceding to this collective fantasy, he becomes merchandise, "an inconceivable phenomenon of self-reification, through which one offers and shows off as disposable merchandise" (*Le Discours antillais* 300). The background here is

Marx's concept of surplus value; it is specifically alluded to by Glissant in the framework of the economy of the master-slave dialectics: "The concerns about revenue and surplus value determine the practices, if not the politics, of the settlers who are owners of slaves" (294).

Marx's formulas defining surplus-value have long ago been demonstrated as mathematically (and thus really) inconsistent; this means that no serious economist can assign a monetary value to them: all that can be calculated are revenues and profits. [11] But Marx was on to something. There is a benefit, a surplus attached to the position of the master, but it has to be envisioned as symbolic, not material. That is why Lacan in effect replaced surplus value (a financial reward) with surplus *jouissance* (a symbolic one). This means that there is not only a market for labor (this is Marx's innovation and discovery), but there is also a market for knowledge, where merits and values can be assessed, where choices and preferences can be organized. In other words, surplus *jouissance* is fundamentally a discursive, a knowledge *jouissance* (Lacan 17 and passim). This is exactly what Glissant says: "The slave is the one who does not know, but who desires with all his power and fights for this sometimes" (Chevrier 56). In contrast, "the slave of slavery is the one who does not want to know," not only about the history of slavery, but in general: that is, after all, an excellent description of the Hegelian master's position in its staticity and immobilism. The master is the one who does not want to know. Why would the master want to know, since knowledge would imply a threatening change that would be an upset of his own position?

Lacan's discourse's similarity with Glissant's is striking. I do not mean by that that Glissant is "Lacanian"; from what I know, he wasn't. What I want to demonstrate is a kinship of analysis. Indeed, Glissant extends Martinican *jouissance* beyond the sexual dominion, by considering its application to consumerism and merchandise:

> This obsession for immediate *jouissance* contaminates almost all spheres of activity. A customer absolutely and immediately desires a merchandise, he will not have the patience to assess its adequacy to some use; a newly established trader absolutely and immediately desires to recoup his investment, he will not have the patience to articulate his sales strategy, to spread out his profits, even if he guesses that his customers should multiply in proportion to this profit staggering. (*Le Discours antillais* 296)

The Martinican is a Citizen in the Hegelian sense, master and slave at the same time: he may serve in the French army (and kill like the master), but he works or he receives unemployment benefits like the slave.[12] According to Glissant, what the Martinican Citizen has not learned about the master position is the renunciation of *jouissance*, in order to accumulate capital or knowledge: everything, prestige and money, has to be spent immediately. Hence, saturation neuroses (through the unlimited offering of merchandise) or privation neuroses (through the disconnect between merchandise and its use) emerge in Martinican society. According to Glissant then, the Martinican is stuck with the master's prestige spending of the Ancien Régime within a modern economy that demands accumulation of capital.

Glissant does not miss the relationship between surplus *jouissance* and discourse; for example, the relationship to land is "a poetics of excessiveness (*démesure*), where everything

has to be spent at once" (*Le Discours antillais* 276).[13] This poetics is theoretically developed further in the Caribbean discourse under the heading of "Verbal Delirium," the title of an entire section of the *Discours antillais* (361–93). Glissant reads this delirium as a symptom of alienated Martinican *jouissance*, but it is redeemed as a poetic creation by Évariste Suffrin, a field laborer who founded a sect in the Lamentin, under the name of *The Dogma of Cham*, and who wrote baroque manifestoes. Suffrin's poetics here compensate for failed *jouissance*.

In passing, one may wonder if Glissant's analysis is not only limited to postcolonial sexuality, consumerism, and discourses in Martinique, but can be extended to mankind's contemporary condition in general.[14] With his dazzling symptomatology, Glissant would have "hit a nerve" not only in the specific Martinican context, but on a much larger scale.

In the chapter of *Le Discours antillais* I have briefly surveyed, Glissant entirely escapes any identification either with the slaves' descendants, the practitioners of Martinican *jouissance*, or the masters (*békés* from France who employ them). Indeed, he creates new psychoanalytic categories that are also explicitly ethical evaluations with a negative connotation: "privation" or "saturation" neuroses, "obstruction neuroses," "connection" and "deconnection" psychoses are for Glissant symptoms of the Martinican mental disequilibrium. A first justification for this position of mastery is Glissant's rejection of sympathy, which he delineates when he rereads Maud Mannoni's psychoanalysis of a psychotic Martinican, Georges Payote: "Problems are 'overcome.' The other's gaze 'signals' them, but they are referred to a more encompassing problematic, for example a psychoanalytic one, where they are diluted. That is the reduction by universalism. *Sympathy is generalization*" (*Le Discours antillais* 304, emphasis added).

In Maud Mannoni's case, generalization will erase Georges Payote's specificity as a Martinican. Hence, identification has to be avoided in order to really delimit problems. This rule can be generalized and has to be applied to the fictional writings: Glissant never identifies fully with any of his characters, and/or he identifies with all of them. The end result is the same: the reader cannot adopt a specific position, identify with one particular character without betraying Glissant's intent; this applies also to any of Glissant's theoretical propositions, or, for that matter, to his novels. For example, in *Mahagony*, Glissant is at the same time a character in a book (26), a "nègre marron" (28), an author, a man, a parabola (31), a creature, and a creator (31). All of these viewpoints are further complicated, as Celia Britton has shown, by the proliferation of narrators in the novel (Britton 169–78). Glissant himself stressed the point regarding *Tout-monde*:

> The book is built so that one cannot tell who is speaking. First, it was said that the author speaks. Then it was said: "Somebody is speaking." Then it was even said "Id speaks," in the psychoanalytical senses of the word "Id." . . . That or who who speaks is multiple; one cannot know from where he comes: perhaps he doesn't know himself and he doesn't control or direct the utterance of speech. What is projected as speech encounters a multiple other who is the multiple of the world. When one delineates a diversity poetics as I attempt to do, one cannot speak from the point of view of unicity. (*Introduction* 131)

Indeed, the refusal of sympathy leads to a much more general refusal of identification with victims in Glissant's work, a refusal which has to be described as nothing else but a rejection of victimology. One example will suffice here: "Enough whining! Let us dare forward. Let us get the narrative down to our present, let us push it into the future!" (Glissant, *Traité* 61). Victimology, in fact, is nothing but a recondition of the Hegelian slave-master dialectics; the identification with the slave's fate is a disguised aspiration to the master's position. Hence, Glissant's rejection of identification is also an escape from Hegelian dialectics. In other words, identification is an anachronistic symptom of eternal resentment regarding claims that history has settled, and nothing is further from Glissant's boldness. To which we can add that a simple denunciation of slavery is a gratuitous act, in the sense that it states the obvious and generates universal consent. Glissant's prohibition of whining is thus a way to eschew both Hegelian dialectics and any universal consensus. Of course, as Glissant states everywhere, the refusal of sympathy doesn't absolve any of us of a duty for memory, particularly in the case of the Slave Trade.

This escape out of Hegelian dialectics (be it under the guise of its restoration by the slave himself as aspiring to the master's position) corresponds to a deep movement in Glissant's work. It has to do with politics (Hegel being of course, in essence, about politics and its history). Refusal to be bound by the master-slave couple is thus a refusal of political determinations. This is fully spelled out in the *Entretiens*; in the context of the numerous decolonization struggles during the 1950s and 1960s, Glissant interrogates the writer's political function: "It was, schematically . . . the question of writing interfering directly in a struggle, as a means of accelerating this struggle and of giving it a favorable resolution. I was always very categorical as far as an answer was concerned. The purpose of writing was not to precipitate politics (a vast theme at that time, when Sartre's conception of writing was triumphant)" (*Entretiens* 59–60).

But Glissant goes further than this rejection of political utilitarianism as far as literature is concerned. In fact, he dismisses any determination for his poetic and theoretical activity, including determinants that the poet has given himself; this move opens literature to an exalting freedom, which is at the same time frightening—it is always easier to work within the framework of determinants, even those freely chosen by the writer or thinker. However, everyone knows that it is the price to pay to achieve greatness in the context of modern literature, that is, a literature which is since Romanticism no longer based on tradition, rhetoric, common places, and the renewal of topoi (commonplaces). Again, all this is spelled out clearly in the *Entretiens*: "But I also believe in the poet's astuteness or instinctive ruse . . . A poet does not obey, does not conform himself to, the general ideas, even those which *he has formulated for himself*. . . . The poet's innocence or instinctive ruse would prevent him consenting or sacrificing to determinations which he would have by himself considered as very evident" (Glissant 42–43). Again, the anti-Hegelian underpinnings of this statement are obvious. Glissant implicitly opposes the poet's ruse to what Hegel called the ruse of reason, which works throughout history: "Passion's particular concern is not separable from the active affirmation of the universal . . . it is not the idea which exposes itself to conflict, to struggle and to danger; reason is beyond the grasp of any attack and any damage and sends passion into combat in order that passion consumes itself in it. One may call the *ruse of reason* the fact that it lets passions act in its place" (Hegel 233). A twenty-first century reader has many motives to doubt Hegel's assertion; it is almost

impossible to interpret the collapse of the Napoleonic Empire, World War I (the collapse of Europe), the Holocaust, etc. as passionate struggles beneath which a universal reason is at work. [15] Hence, reason's universality is not grounded in principle and is de facto contradicted by the human history that came after Hegel. This is not to say that Hegel is invalidated: the master-slave dialectics (as he himself asserted) survives in a mutated form in the modern political state; the ruse of reason still works through history. But neither can be considered universal; there are thus numerous spaces and times that they do not structure. Hence, Glissant's refusal of Hegelian dialectics is not an outright dismissal at all: it is a rereading of this dialectics that modifies it. This choice is expressed in *Le Discours antillais*, as an answer to criticism: "The novels I write never *directly* oppose the master and the slave" (286, fn 5). In the space of this indirection, the novels can surge, beyond determinations: "The core of the relation nexus attempted in these novels is to precisely show that the master-slave opposition in Martinique is always overdetermined and that it would be an error to consider it as determinant" (286, fn 5). In other words, Hegelian dialectics are no longer considered as absolute, but relativized in a specific context where they lose their overarching preeminence. This also undermines the identificatory readings I outlined above: in the novels, as there is no all-encompassing theme, there won't be a privileged point of view, a dominant character that would organize the narrative materials.

This leads us to the double question of the *jouissance* of Glissant himself, to his own surplus *jouissance*, to his master position.

Glissant's entire *oeuvre*, in all its manifestations (poems, plays, novels, essays) is masterful, in the sense that the fundamental principles of his own discourse are purely posited as self-evidence, sublated from the dialectics of questioning. I don't mean that Glissant's propositions have escaped careful and lengthy questioning by Glissant (or others, during conversations) before being posited; I mean that Glissant's principles are presented not in their formative processes, but as results (the formative explanation comes afterward, if it ever appears). A master at forging poetic concepts, Glissant doesn't need to justify or explain himself, *as long as his mastery is recognized by others (readers)*.

In the context of Glissant's mastery, *Le Discours antillais* occupies a special place; in its original form, it was presented in 1980 to an academic jury at Paris VIII in order to obtain the symbolic recognition of a specific mastery, namely a PhD (*doctorat sur pièces*, that is, granted on the basis of published works); no wonder then that *Le Discours antillais* shows a number of characteristics that are exceptional in the context of Glissant's broader activity as a writer: the demonstrative and documented genre is given much more space than in the later essays. In its inception, *Le Discours antillais* is intended as a demonstration of academic mastery. In this work, theory is isolated from other discourses, whereas further down in Glissant's work, poetry, theory, philosophy, and novel will more and more be integrated in a vast ensemble where partitions between genres become intentionally blurred, to incite a future where new genres will arise: "From the integration or the erasure or the resurrection of all literary genres, theater plays, essays, novels, poetry, perhaps new genres will be borne. Perhaps we will witness unheard of crossbreedings between the arts?" (*Entretiens* 122). Or elsewhere: "I believe that we will invent new genres about which we now have no conception" (*Entretiens* 124).

The status of *Le Discours antillais* in the larger framework of Glissant's oeuvre is therefore exceptional: it is the book that approximates most closely academic discourse, not without

disrupting it quite a bit. An example of this disruption is the inspiration from Hegel that leaves a profound mark in the chapter, without ever being mentioned.

This ellipsis of Hegel by Glissant will be repeated further in the chapter, when he will speak about the master's and the slave's *jouissances*. Academic discourse is disrupted in two ways: first formally, since the "source" is not mentioned; second, methodologically, since passion and affectivity are (or were) not supposed parts of the scholar's arsenal in the university's discourse, whereas Glissant explicitly appropriates them: "From a methodological point of view, this exposé will be perhaps marked by passion and affectivity, which are components of the problem" (*Le Discours antillais* 296).

The articles and lectures were then rewritten, indicating Glissant's determination to effectuate both a transfer from academic discourse to something different, and a reinscription of the originals into the broader framework of his work. Thus, academic mastery is mutated into another mastery which I will look at below. Incidentally, this pattern of transference is one of the main features of Glissant writing at large: poetry becomes theory, novels treatises, treatises fiction and poetry, in a constant creolization of genres that breach traditional literary categories.

All this leads to the questioning of Glissant's position as a master writer and of his own *jouissance*. We have already seen that Glissant refuses the master's surplus *jouissance* as well as any identification with the slave's: this delineates a very narrow path for his own surplus *jouissance*. The more so, because he also refuses the *jouissance* of being the leader of a school of thought or the sanctified founder of a literary chapel; all those characters, according to him, belong to a history of literature that is long past, and has been overcome by the *Tout-monde*, which has no place for such rigidities:

> What does it mean, To be the leader of a school? It means that there are people who "follow" you, who listen to what you say. It doesn't go beyond this. In the Tout-Monde, writers test their pens and their wings in an individual manner; there is no system-thinking, no ideology. If there were system-thoughts and ideologies, we would come back to the old mistakes, and in that case, one should not grant such an import to this literary school phenomenon. (Glissant, *Introduction* 143)

Glissant's surplus *jouissance* is led by this straight and narrow pathway to the only space of a possible concretization: poetic and imaginary writing itself; there is proof of this everywhere in Glissant's work, too ample to be detailed here.[16] Relation, the *Tout-monde*, and creolization are not to be concretized in the real world; their field of application is poetry itself. That is the only space where they can be fully acted out.

And here, Hegel, once again, rears his head; it is difficult to get rid of such a powerful thinker. Romanticism (born in Germany and which he criticizes extensively in his aesthetics) and the French Revolution conjointly give birth to a new profession and to new actors on the stage of history: the Intellectual. The Intellectual is a "kindhearted man." He realizes himself by critiquing the society he lives in. In other words, his action is purely verbal, and his means of action is his talent, which he demonstrates by his talent itself, in a circular way. That is how he obtains the recognition of his mastery: through words.[17] A sub-species of the Intellectual is the "beautiful soul," the Romantic poet, who satisfies

himself by an existence that is only "literary" and projects his internal disorder into the world, and then believes that the world is the cause of his inner disorder. The Romantic complacently reveals the only thing which interests him: himself. He is not interested by the world, only his ego seems to be worthy of interest; hence he flees the world and finds refuge in his ivory tower. For Hegel, the world in which the Intellectual lives is the one where everybody criticizes everybody, and where everybody criticizes everything: Romanticism is essentially a huge clatter that does not modify the world; the romantic only thinks that his words modify the world.

In brief, the heirs to the Hegelian intellectual proliferate everywhere, and I would argue that Glissant did not intend to be read according to that incantational mode which constantly laments the horrors and the disorders of the "world." This is because Glissant's bypassing of Hegelian dialectics is *also* a way out of the dead ends of Romanticism, the beautiful soul, and the "kindhearted man." Let us briefly review the practices and theories that distance Glissant from the Romantic poet; this catalog may appear trivial and evident, but it is useful to better delineate his poetics.

The Romantic poet is supposed to be a genius who expresses himself (or the "essence of his nation") in his work. From this presupposition derives the dogma of originality, which is hence, after all, a very recent criterion of evaluation for literature. Pre-romantic writers were not in search of originality: they had at their disposal genres models, collections of topoi, commonplaces shared by any educated writer, "writer-textbooks" (the ancient treatises of rhetoric); in essence, literature was innovative despite and against its rhetorical nature. With Romanticism, this common heritage is substitute by the genius' ego; note that these conceptions both share a notion of literature as something that expresses a "before": the literary heritage with the pre-romantics, and the self after that.

Glissant doesn't "express himself in his works"; Relation is not an expression of the self. He refuses to be a beautiful soul in the Hegelian mode. Moreover, his work is in its entirety projected towards a future, not with a restatement of the past (his past self or his past literary schooling). If he were to be reattached to a literary tradition, it would be pre-romantic, in the sense that he exalts the commonplace in its rhetorical sense as well as in its aspect of a space in the world: "That is what the common place designates: it captures our imaginaries better than any system of ideas" (Glissant, *Traité du Tout-Monde* 23).[18]

Glissant also refuses the demise of literature into impotence that Hegel sees in Romanticism: for Hegel, philosophy is *the* privileged space where the world is interpreted and modified, and where history must find its end in what Hegel called absolute knowledge: a space where action, represented by Napoleon, and thought, represented by himself, are finally unified. For Glissant, poetics are an act: "Poetics is not an art of dreaming or an illusion . . . but a manner of conceiving oneself, of conceiving one's relation to oneself and to the other and a manner of expressing it. Any poetics is a network" (*Introduction* 133). The paradox here, or the ruse, is that Relation poetics has to remain virtual. This theme appears very early, in the first essay: "The intention, even voluntary, will die if it becomes real" (*L'Intention* 12). It is repeated in a late text: "And I call *Relation poetics* this possible of the imaginary . . ." (*Traité du Tout-Monde* 22). The poetic intention absolutely needs to remain at the level of an intention; when it manifests itself, it immediately masks itself. Moreover, the realization, the act (the book), always uncovers how it misses the aim of the poetic intention: "The work that materializes its purpose uncovers another (hidden)

purpose of the author, a purpose that remains open and will have to be accomplished. The writer is always the ghost of the writer he wants to be" (*L'Intention* 35).

In other words, Relation poetics and the *Tout-monde* forever remain a potentiality: as soon as they materialize, they betray their aim and become a veil for an intention that remains unconscious. The everlasting potentiality of Relation, precisely because of its forever virtuality, does not believe that it is an act. It thus escapes Hegel's condemnation of the Intellectual and the beautiful soul, who are convinced that their chatter is an act that modifies the world. Combined with the bypassing of master-slave dialectics and the refusal of identification to the victim, Relation is the culmination of Glissant's circumvention of Hegel.

Relation's everlasting potentiality gives us the key to Glissant's pleasure and *jouissance*, outside the master and the slave's cursed duo: contrary to the immediate spending for prestige, they reside in the infinite and cumulative pursuit, through words and poetry, of an infinitely remote aim, an aim he called Relation and the *Tout-monde*. The accumulation of knowledge capital, on the side of deferral of pleasure, serves as spending, on the side of *jouissance*, which is at the same time prestigious and utilitarian, in the noble sense of the term: both result in Glissant's books.

The space of Glissant's work is where the author's and his innumerable readers' pleasures and *jouissances*, shared in Relation, become real.

NOTES

1. For a more detailed reading of Hegel, I refer to Alexandre Kojève's illuminating *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*.
2. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Glissant's texts in this article are mine.
3. Lacan's Hegel is to be found mainly in *Séminaire XVI: d'un autre à l'Autre*. It is built almost exclusively on Kojève's interpretation.
4. It is important to note that Hegel doesn't use the word "slave" (*Sklave* in German), but "servant" (*Knecht*); he speaks in and to a world, nineteenth-century Germany, where slavery has been eradicated.
5. *Jouissance* means in French at the same time "enjoyment," "orgasm," "property rights," and "usufruct," designating the pleasures procured by the flesh, the mind, and merchandise. As such, it is not translatable directly in English; I thus keep its original form. In Hegel, *jouissance* is *Genüss*. A probable path from Lacan, where *jouissance* is a fundamental concept, to Glissant is the latter's friendship with Félix Guattari, a disciple (even if he "strayed away") of Lacan.
6. There is an exception to this rule: it is the spending of the labor force for expenses of pure prestige, for example Versailles in seventeenth-century France, whose goal is to assert the splendor of Louis XIV as a master.
7. "For Hegel, as for Marx, the central phenomenon of the bourgeois world is not the subservience of the worker (or of the poor bourgeois) by the rich bourgeois, but the enslavement of both by Capital" (Kojève 191).
8. On the motive of the mutation of real change into entertainment, see *Une nouvelle région du monde* 27–28.
9. "My proposition, which was seen as controversial during a debate on the Oedipus complex, is that the Oedipal relationship has not been a problem [in Martinique]" (Glissant, *Le Discours antillais* 286).
10. Glissant goes on to show that the relationship to merchandise as an object of desire is also short-circuited by this fundamental precipitation.
11. See von Bortkiewicz.
12. Full citizenship as members of a French department was granted to the Martiniquais by France in 1946, "a trauma which comes from the trap of a civil status allocated, that is granted, that is imposed" (*Le Discours antillais* 277).

13. "Démesure " is intimately connected to poetics, as later developed by Glissant in the *Introduction à une poétique du divers*; see in particular 93–95.
14. Such is Jean-Claude Milner's conclusion to a detailed demonstration: "In the modern universe, there are only bodily and sexual pleasures, which means that there are only pleasures tied to objects-merchandises-goods" (122).
15. The Napoleonic Empire emblematized the triumph of reason for Hegel. After Napoleon, he turned his hopes towards the Prussian State, which, on the other hand, he hated. See Kojève 291.
16. I refer the reader to my article "L'appel du futur, sur les essais d'Édouard Glissant."
17. See Kojève 86–91, 151 for the beautiful soul.
18. Carminella Biondi has stressed the theme of the common place in "Du lieu d'origine au lieu commun."

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