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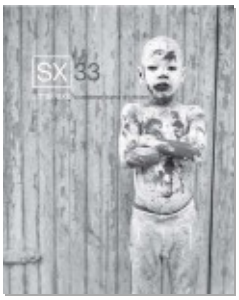

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Whatever else it may have been, the manifesto "Pour une 'littérature-monde' en français," published in 2007, was part of a shrewd marketing campaign, a rebranding, so to speak, of French-language literature, designed to make the work of French authors more competitive in the contemporary global literary marketplace.[1] Of particular note is the manifesto's emphasis on the ties between France and the rest of the French-speaking world, its eagerness to resituate metropolitan French literature *within* rather than outside, above, or in opposition to *la francophonie*. In this respect, the manifesto is highly significant as part of a growing movement to supersede the well-entrenched but implicitly Eurocentric model of francophonie, promoting a more open, egalitarian community of letters of the kind implied by the English term *world literature* (itself a successor to the more Eurocentric notion of *Commonwealth literature*). This project is undeniably progressive in intent, but we should pause to notice that the decentering effect created by the manifesto's critique of francophonie is doubled by a slightly less explicit but significantly more selfish argument. In proclaiming solidarity with writers from the former colonies, Michel Le Bris (the primary author of the manifesto) seems also to be looking for a way to co-opt some of the minoritarian mojo that has made postcolonial literature such a hot commodity in the United States and Britain. French literature is now itself a minoritarian literature, the manifesto suggests, a reservoir of cultural difference in danger of

1 Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud, "Pour une 'littérature-monde' en français," *Le Monde*, 16 March 2007.

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being overwhelmed by the flow of cultural products from English-speaking countries. As such it must struggle in solidarity with other French-speaking countries around the world against Anglo-American hegemony.

There is some irony in this use by a French writer of the rhetoric of postcolonial victimization, but my intent here is not to impugn the legitimacy of this strategy or the sincerity of the writers associated with the project. It is rather to recognize that the manifesto is, among other things, a reaction to changes in the global cultural marketplace, changes that have left many metropolitan French writers struggling to connect with audiences outside of France even as writers with postcolonial credentials have been receiving ever more attention, both within and outside of France.[2] In this sense the manifesto may be more of a symptom than a movement, more an acknowledgment of a state of affairs than the bold new departure it claims to be. Still, even if there is an element of French self-interest at work in the manifesto, its attempt to emphasize a global linguistic affiliation instead of the inherently hierarchical opposition between France and francophonie has the potential to benefit all of the concerned parties. And indeed, a majority of the essays included in *Pour une littérature-monde*, the follow-up volume to the manifesto, are by authors from the former colonies who make it clear that they concur with the general thrust of the manifesto even as they distance themselves from or refine some of its subsidiary theses.[3] It is that perspective I would like to pursue in what follows.

From *Littérature-monde* to *Tout-monde*

To someone who studies the Caribbean, what I find striking about the manifesto is its clear debt to the thought of one of its most prestigious signatories: Edouard Glissant. The very title of the manifesto hints at this influence, through its use of the hyphenated *littérature-monde* formulation, which echoes many of Glissant's coinages like *Tout-monde*, *chaos-monde*, and *échos-monde*, as much as it evokes the English term *world literature*. This might be a coincidental similarity (there are only so many ways in French to get across a concept like *world literature*), but there is good reason to think that Glissant's work has had a great deal of influence on this movement, both direct and indirect. Not only did Glissant sign the manifesto and contribute a piece (titled "Solitaire et solidaire") to the companion volume *Pour une littérature-monde*, he has been a regular participant in the annual event at the origin of the manifesto project, the festival Etonnants voyageurs, which has been organized by Michel Le Bris since 1989. Moreover, if we look at Le Bris's essay in *Pour une littérature-monde*, we find several clear allusions to Glissant's thought, including the almost word-for-word definition of one of Glissant's key concepts, *creolization*, as "a continual process of multiple hybridizations" (*PLM*,

2 By *postcolonial credentials* I mean not only writers from the former colonies but also those of French nationality who have a distinct minority identity, whether they were born and raised in mainland France (e.g., Beurs) or its territories (e.g., Martinique). I would also include in this group writers such as J. M. G. Le Clézio and Michel Tournier, who have a long-standing interest in writing about France's place in the postcolonial world.

3 Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud, eds., *Pour une littérature-monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007); hereafter cited in text as *PLM*.

40). Indeed, Glissant has reflected on the kinds of issues that interest Lebris for many years, at least since his publication of *Poétique de la Relation* in 1990.[4]

Given the close parentage between Glissant's thought and the littérature-monde project, it seems appropriate to ask how Glissant's writing helps to understand the project—its limitations as well as its promise—and to what extent it can help to achieve the program sketched out there. In particular, we will want to be alert to potential weaknesses in these two overlapping theories of world literature, even as we explore their promise. For although both of the projects loudly proclaim their progressive goals, the commercial aspect of the littérature-monde manifesto, and the utopian dimension of Glissant's thinking, seem to call for vigilance. I will seek to address in particular the critique of Glissant offered by Peter Hallward and recently seconded, with some reservations, by Christopher Miller. For Hallward, Glissant's theory of Tout-monde has a dangerous penchant for a kind of mystical or aestheticized vision of the world that makes it useless (or worse) as a guide for addressing the particular kinds of injustice and social dysfunction that continue to plague countries that have known colonial oppression and its neocolonial avatars.[5] Christopher Miller's Hallwardian hesitation about Glissant is first voiced in *Nationalists and Nomads* and again in *The French Atlantic Triangle*, where he sees a need to "save" Glissant's fiction from his own theorizing, in particular "the homogenization of the Tout-monde."[6] In what follows I will be arguing that Glissant's theory of Tout-monde is in fact able to address some of the most salient social and cultural problems of the postcolonial world, in ways that Miller's work already suggests but that Hallward (a self-described "neo-Jacobin nationalist") is unwilling even to consider.[7]

Glissant as a *Post*-Postcolonial Thinker

Readers of Edouard Glissant will know that he shares many of the aspirations and concerns of the littérature-monde manifesto. Like the authors of the manifesto, Glissant emphasizes the decisive role of globalization, which has irrevocably marked even the most remote communities, often in damaging, even catastrophic, ways but which has also enabled unprecedented levels of mutually beneficial contact between cultures. The terms on which this contact takes place are still largely controlled by the former colonial powers, but the conversation itself has become increasingly multidirectional and egalitarian as new voices enter in.

Where Glissant distinguishes himself with respect to most of the other contributors to the littérature-monde volume is in his commitment to understanding the underlying mechanisms

4 Edouard Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990); translated into English by Betsy Wing as *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

5 See Peter Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing Between the Singular and the Specific* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

6 See Christopher L. Miller, *Nationalists and Nomads: Essays on Francophone African Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 5; and *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 340–56.

7 See Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial*, 126–27. Hallward's neo-Jacobinism leads him to argue that any political recognition of cultural differences is incompatible with the articulation of egalitarian political principles.

of cultural evolution that have given rise to our current postmodern, postcolonial era. Since *Poétique de la Relation* Glissant has been working toward a general theory of cultural change that seeks to be universally valid while also attuned to the concerns of developing countries as they seek to carve out cultural niches in what Le Bris calls the "conversation" or "dialogue" of world cultures (*PLM*, 43, 45). Even when the phenomena Glissant discusses are Caribbean, the logic that governs his analyses, and the goals that define his overarching philosophical system, are global in their reach and theoretical scope. In this sense we could say that Glissant is not actually a postcolonial thinker. He started out as one, to be sure, but he has evolved into a thinker who is so important precisely because he has been able to use the specifically Caribbean, postcolonial dimension of his experience as the point of departure for a general theory that seeks to understand the underlying forces that drive the evolution of *all* cultures. We could say, in this sense, that Glissant is a *post*-postcolonial thinker. He has attained a perspective from which it is possible to see the postcolonial situation as part of a larger puzzle, and understood that the resolution of postcolonial problems requires a sense of how the totality can be repaired. This is why Glissant's thought is so consonant with the aesthetic and cultural program enunciated in the littérature-monde manifesto and also, I think, why it has fallen out of favor with critics of a militant or nationalist bent.

Glissant's emphasis on Relation since *Poétique de la Relation* has been built on the premise that we must recognize the specificity of every community while also putting an end to all forms of exceptionalism. That is to say, we must recognize and honor those things that make a culture unique, while also acknowledging that none of them are signs of some kind of absolute difference, but rather local manifestations of more general principles that are at work wherever we may care to look. It is interesting to note in this regard that Glissant's position is directly symmetrical to that of Le Bris. Just as the manifesto's author argues for the need to leave behind the limiting emphasis on French exceptionalism in order to embrace the more inclusive category of world literature, Glissant has left behind his former regionalist, anticolonial stance (cultivated in earlier texts such as *La Lézarde* and *Le discours antillais*)[8] in a way that allows him to meet the authors of the manifesto on this more international, cosmopolitan, cooperative—and thus *post*-postcolonial—conceptual terrain. In both cases there is a movement away from an oppositional particularism and toward a neutral forum in which free exchange is fostered.

There is another point, however, on which Glissant's relationship to the littérature-monde manifesto is more complicated. Le Bris argues for what he presents as a long overdue "rediscovery of the world" (*PLM*, 25), which gives rise to a virulent and (in 2007) oddly anachronistic diatribe against the nouveau roman, deconstruction, and other textualist movements of the 1950s through 1970s. Glissant, however, is of all the signatories of the manifesto the one whose ongoing experiments in literary language are closest to those of the nouveau roman,

8 See Edouard Glissant, *La Lézarde* (Paris: Seuil, 1958), and *Le discours antillais* (Paris: Seuil, 1981).

especially to its Claude Simon, Faulknerian wing. To be sure, Glissant's novels are not abstract or empty (they put the emphasis on historical and social referents of great import), but they are obscure—or *opaque*, to borrow one of his favorite terms—and they bring the problematics of representation to the fore in a highly self-reflexive manner. They do so because for Glissant, as for the Alain Robbe-Grillet of *Pour un nouveau roman,* the fundamental task of the writer is to explore the resources of the language itself, to develop new modes of representation able to capture elements of reality that had hitherto been neglected or misconstrued.[9] Indeed, if we accept Glissant's characterization of the world as governed by the ongoing processes of creolization, which are constantly generating new and unprecedented kinds of phenomena, then we see that this work on the language of representation is of the utmost importance. If literature is to be able to keep up, to continue to play its heuristic role as a generator of new insights into the world around us, it must evolve. And if we agree with Glissant that globalization is the primary historical fact of our era, then the question becomes one of finding or inventing the representational and analytic tools that will enable us best to cope with and shape these new conditions.

This is where Glissant's concept of Tout-monde comes into play.

Tout-monde: Between Relation and Opacity

What is *Tout-monde*? It is emphatically not the world itself, in the geospatial or geopolitical sense of the term. It is in fact more a mode of cognition than a geographical construct. "The world is not the *Tout-monde*," the character Longoué explains, in the novel *Tout-monde*, "because the *Tout-monde* is the world that you tossed around in your thoughts while it was tossing you in its swell."[10] In other words, Tout-monde implies a certain *vision* of the world, in the phenomenological sense of a consciousness that is simultaneously aware of and awash in the world around it. But if phenomenologists such as Husserl and Merleau-Ponty tend to think in terms of the relationship between a consciousness and its immediately perceptible environment, Tout-monde emphasizes a more properly global awareness, an intuition of the extent to which distant places and events impinge on my understanding of the immediate environment. In order to better understand how this might work, we need an appreciation of the role that *opacity* and *analogy* play in Glissant's thought.

Opacity, we know, is a concept dear to Glissant and has an important role to play in his identitarian theory. For Glissant, the zone of opacity of any individual or community is something that cannot be communicated, that part of its identity which remains inaccessible to outsiders. Glissant uses the term *opacity* to designate the fundamental core of our identity; opacity is the guarantee of our individuality. Some, like Hallward, have been tempted to see in this concept the implication of a kind of monadological incommensurability between

9 See Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Pour un nouveau roman* (Paris: Minuit, 1961).
10 Edouard Glissant, *Tout-monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 208; hereafter cited in text as *TM*. All translations are mine.

individuals, the assumption of an absolute difference or otherness that makes intersubjective communication impossible or irrelevant.[11] But if we think of what we mean when we talk about opacity in literature, we can see that this is not Glissant's intent: the opaque is the remainder that is left over whenever I try to convert an element from one system to another, for example, to translate poetry, or to explain to someone else a subjectively experienced sensation, however mundane. Opacity is more of an epistemological problem than a problem of ontological essences and may ultimately boil down to a simple question of personal style.

Opacity, then, is that part of one's identity that, by definition, cannot be understood by others, at least not in its own right. It is untranslatable. Nevertheless, analogy, the *mise en contact*, or *mise en relation,* of opaque elements provides a way to externalize our own zones of opacity and to understand those of others: "You do not illuminate the obscure, there is no recipe for it; instead you relate it to what is known all around. . . . That is what he was pursuing with his words: this fragment of obscurities that, from below, was putting places and people into contact" (*TM*, 305). For this reason analogy is at the heart of Glissant's theory of Tout-monde, understood now as an epistemological program, a mode of inquiry that seeks to get a better sense of the meaning of objects, events, people, and communities by emphasizing their participation in the larger webs of relation that link them to analogous phenomena elsewhere in the world. Once acquired, this analogical habit can have profound effects on the way individuals view their local environment, fundamentally altering their sense of self and place. "I am this mangrove country around Lamentin in Martinique where I grew up," Glissant writes in *Traité du Tout-monde*, "and at the same time, through an infinite imperceptible presence, which does not subjugate the Other, this shore of the Nile where the reeds turn to pulp like sugarcanes."[12] It is this stereoscopic perspective that the novel *Tout-monde* attempts to put into play. Although his protagonists still identify strongly as Martinicans, they come to realize that all those things they had initially thought to be specifically Martinican or Caribbean or French are in fact tied to analogous phenomena all over the world. They are constantly struck, in their travels, by the uncanny sensation that an object encountered in Egypt or the United States is closely related to something they had thought specific to their homeland, and that, in fact, to *fully* understand those phenomena they had thought to be most typically Martinican, they must understand their relation to analogous phenomena in other parts of the world, at other times, and in other languages. Thus the heroes of this novel are

> those who could put into relation such distant landscapes . . . which make contact through evanescent appearances and the same aching depth. In this way the indefinable mornings of Mississippi . . . came to encounter the traces of faded mud on the flanks of our local hills. . . . Those who entered into the Tout-monde, the burning and glum chaos. . . . They began to understand what it means to read or write. (*TM*, 194)

11 See Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial*, 124; also, 95–99.

12 Edouard Glissant, *Traité du Tout-monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 178; hereafter cited in text as *TTM*. All translations are mine.

This work of putting distant places together turns the chaos of the world of immediate experience (which Glissant calls variously *chaos-monde* or *totalité-monde*) into something cognizable, something that makes sense. As Glissant writes in "Solitaire et solidaire" (his contribution to the littérature-monde volume): "For me, the highest point is the 'Tout-monde'; the current chaos-monde is that which is given and that we have not yet explored" (*PLM*, 83).

This opposition between chaos-monde and Tout-monde is further clarified in *Traité du Tout-monde*. Chaos-monde is, well, chaotic, whereas Tout-monde is the order that can be drawn out of this chaos, a unifying perspective, a totalizing vision (*TTM*, 22). What makes possible this kind of global awareness? The poetics of relation, which enriches our understanding of our own place even as it situates it within the larger global context. "And I call *poetics of relation* this potential of the imagination that leads us to consider the ungraspable globality of this kind of chaos-monde at the same time that it helps us to pick out details, and in particular to sing of our place, unfathomable and irreversible" (ibid.; italics in original). The goal, then, is to reconcile the local and the global, to gain this totalizing perspective but without losing track of the particulars.

It is important to understand that Tout-monde implies a kind of dual vision, which enables us to continue to see individuals as individuals even as we consider them within this larger global context. Generalization, the vacuity of the universal, is as dangerous for Glissant as the exclusionary particularisms of essentialism. This brings us to what is no doubt the primary sociocultural challenge that Glissant tries to address through his poetics of relation: finding a third path between the two main identitarian threats that have emerged in the era of globalization—essentialism and homogenization. The first can be thought of as an excessive attachment to our existing identity, the atavistic temptation to hole ourselves up in the shell of our own irremediable differences. This is, as Glissant (along with political scientists like Benjamin Barber) reminds us, often a reaction to the second fear, which is that the encroachment of outside influences will destroy our cultural identity by inundating it with the cultural products of alien hegemonic powers like the United States.[13]

How, then, does one go about navigating these dangerous waters between the particular and the universal, between the local and the global, between established traditions and novel outside influences? At first glance, it might appear to be a simple problem of balance: finding a compromise solution or middle ground between the two. But things are not so simple. Cultural practices and values are not like fluids that can simply be mixed together. Choices must be made, and there are no formulas or recipes to help.

Glissant himself has struggled enormously with this question. It is clear, for example, that the resistance to essentialism and particularism that give rise to his theory of Tout-monde lead in the direction of the universal. And indeed, at times he seems to succumb to the temptation of an abstract universal. The Nile reed passage quoted above begins by asserting that

13 See Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World* (New York: Ballantine, 1996).

"being [*l'étant*] is relation, and mobile [*qui parcourt*]" (*TTM*, 178). This idea has a distinctly structuralist ring, privileging the ontological precedence of the relations between terms over the terms themselves. He seems to be saying that what is real (*l'étant*, that which exists), is relation itself, not the objects that enter into relation. But surely this runs counter to his insistence on the specific and the opaque. Aware of this problem, he sometimes seems to go too far in the other direction, setting up demands for a specificity that is so total as to be impossible: "Don't forget a single detail, not one corner of existence, not one island and not one river, not one dialect nor one rock, in this Whole and this World" (*TM*, 513). This outlook might be called *encyclopedic particularism*, and, carried to its logical limit, it runs the risk of falling into the kind of singularizing beatitude evoked by Hallward in his critique of Glissant's purported Deleuzianism.

We might try to excuse these two extreme positions—the purely relational and the impossibly specific—by arguing that they are merely oppositional markers or boundaries, whose purpose is to stake out the terrain within which Glissant wants to work. I think there is some justification for such a defense. Nonetheless, the question remains: How can these two apparently contradictory demands—the requirement for a vision that is both fully specific and completely relational—be reconciled? Hallward thinks they cannot be. And Miller worries that Hallward is right. But I believe that Glissant does have a response to this conundrum.

Glissant's Theory of Interdependence

In between the Scylla and Charybdis of the abstractive, structuralist, ideal ("Being is relation") and the incomprehensibly chaotic vision of encyclopedic particularism (where one would try to hold in view "all these countries at the same time and in the same moment" [*TM*, 235]), Glissant proposes what I would call a theory of interdependence. This is an understanding of the world as a single interlocking system, in which the effects of even the most minute remote events can be felt locally at some level. It is this idea, for example, that explains Glissant's interest in chaos theory, evoked in *Poétique de la Relation*.[14] As in the so-called butterfly effect, which Edward Lorenz used to explain the principle of "sensitive dependence on initial conditions," Glissant thinks of the world in terms of an enormously complex system in which each player's actions (the butterfly flapping its wings) can have repercussions on the entire system (a hurricane halfway around the globe). This principle of interrelatedness has the effect of releasing us from the too-abstract/too-specific binary by reminding us that we do not have to be able to *enumerate* every individual in the world or to hold in mind every detail of every situation at

14 See Edouard Glissant, "The Relative and Chaos," in *Poetics of Relation*, 133–40. Note that Hallward's critique of Glissant's interest in chaos theory seems to imply a common but elementary misunderstanding of chaos theory's central proposition. Hallward describes Glissant's vision in terms of a kind of aestheticized appreciation of total disorder, a willingness to submit passively to the incomprehensibility of the "tourbillon" of the world (*Absolutely Postcolonial*, xvii, 69, 74, 106–8). But this is actually contrary to the spirit of both chaos theory and Glissant's poetics, which seek to show how we can find order in even the most apparently disorderly phenomena. Glissant makes this quite clear: "The science of Chaos . . . conceives of indeterminacy as a fact that can be analyzed and accident as measurable" ("The Relative and Chaos," 137).

every minute to have a feel, however obscure, for the totality. At some intuitive level we feel the effects of all this diversity on us, whether we are consciously aware of it or not. This, I think, is what Glissant means when he writes of feeling the "imperceptible infinite presence" of the Nile reed in the passage quoted earlier. The challenge of Tout-monde, in this sense, is to represent individual events in ways that highlight their participation in this larger, global scheme, to find a language of representation able to capture simultaneously the relatedness and the uniqueness of every individual.

This ideal is expressed quite concretely in *Tout-monde*, when Rocamarron (one of the many intra-diegetic storytellers who populate the novel) responds to Mathieu Béluse, who had earlier fallen into the trap of the abstraction/specificity duality. Rocamarron begins by chiding Mathieu for failing to understand the difference between the kind of relationality at the root of Tout-monde and the abstractive relationality that gives rise to both theories of universalism and essentialist identities. "It's because you're thinking like in the good old days, said Roca. You still believe in the thing in isolation, the race, the language, the plot of land, the idea. You believe in uniqueness" (*TM*, 555). He then goes on to use the creole garden as a metaphorical illustration of Glissant's theory of interdependence. The specificity of the creole garden is that it involves planting a little bit of this and a little bit of that, in close proximity and apparent disorder. To an outsider, the creole garden might appear to be simply inefficient and disorderly. A single-minded rationalist might propose a more efficient distribution of crops. But Rocamarron emphasizes the hidden virtues of the creole garden. "But look at the creole garden, you put all the crops on such a little lick of land, the avocados, the lemons, the yams, the sugarcane . . . plus thirty or forty other species on this bit of land that doesn't go more then fifty feet up the side of the hill, they protect each other. In the great Circle, everything is in everything else" (ibid.). The various crops "protect each other." The small scale, lack of uniformity, and apparent disorder that make the creole garden inefficient also protect it against ecological perils that have become well known in the era of industrial monoculture, including increased vulnerability to catastrophic failure if a crop should succumb to environmental changes or to pests that evolve around the crops' defenses.

In Glissant's hands, though, the creole garden becomes a potent metaphor for the benefits of *cultural* diversity. The agricultural promiscuity of the creole garden symbolizes the value of interdependent networks of cultural difference.[15] Like the creole garden, the Tout-monde is highly inefficient, but it maintains a reservoir of cultural differences that, working through analogy, fuels innovation and creativity.

> The Tout-monde likes to ramble amongst the useless and take the shortcut that prolongs. And then suddenly you discover the equivalence between such different landscapes, such divergent

15 Note the altogether different reading of this passage given by Hallward in *Absolutely Postcolonial*: he sees in this garden nothing more than a Deleuzian "field of pure immanence" (108). This is a tendentious reading at best, part of Hallward's constant effort to sink Glissant by lashing him to Deleuze's mast.

> languages, yours in the distance and the one that is right here. You think that it was worth the trouble, this wait and your patience. (*TM*, 522)

Glissant's emphasis on the long-term benefits of what may appear in the short term to be simply inefficiency or aimlessness is likely to be frustrating to those ideologues who believe they already have the answers, or to those militants and nationalists who are so focused on the urgency of local, tactical situations that they risk losing sight of the bigger (global) picture and deeper questions of fundamental values. But in a globalizing world dominated increasingly by a small number of cultural superpowers, the defense of cultural diversity evoked here may be just as important in its own way as the defense of biodiversity—and just as important to the revolutionary potential that the militants are trying to cultivate. This, then, may be Glissant's greatest contribution to postcolonial political theory: his apparently apolitical insistence on the big picture, his ability to keep our focus on the larger, strategic field within which the local battles are fought.

Conclusion: A Copernican Revolution?

For Michel Le Bris, the publication of the littérature-monde manifesto marks a "historical moment," which, he thinks, may one day be seen as a kind of Copernican revolution. Why Copernican? Because it marks a shift in perspective from which France can no longer be seen as the center around which the rest of the francophone universe gravitates. Glissant's theory of Tout-monde clearly participates in a similar kind of Copernican decentering, not only away from the former colonial *métropole* but from all homelands conceived as absolute centers, including Glissant's Martinique. This perspective could be called cosmopolitan or postnational. And if it has attracted so much hostility from the militant, "neo-Jacobin" Left exemplified by Hallward, it is no doubt because it might appear to be insufficiently attuned to the local, mainly nationalistic, struggles against postcolonial or neocolonial forms of oppression and exploitation that they care most about. But this, I think, is precisely where the Copernican metaphor suggested by Le Bris can help us.

Copernicus forever changed the way we understand the Earth and its place in the cosmos. But this new framework did not entail a neglect of the Earth. On the contrary: it inspired a whole series of new insights into the nature of the laws that govern movement on Earth, beginning with Galileo and the theory of gravity. In the same way, I would argue, Glissant's decentering of the homeland as the locus of personal and collective identity entails neither neglect of the homeland nor of the struggle against oppression and injustice. On the contrary: it provides just the kind of reconceptualization or reframing of the postcolonial condition that will make possible new solutions to the old intractable problems. And the fact that these solutions may seem frustratingly indirect or conciliatory to the militants among us is no sign of their inferiority. On the contrary.