CHAPTER 2

Navigating Archipelagos

Starting from an island…
—Édouard Glissant

When Guillaume Coppier arrived in the Antilles in 1645, he first set sight on Barbados but did not stop there. Instead he continued to Grenada, where the crew stayed for a short period before the Natives drove them away. The trader then narrates the journey from Grenada, via Saint Lucia and Martinique, passing by Marie Galante, Desirada, Antigua, Marguerite, and Montserrat to reach Saint-Christophe, localizing each island in relation to the ship moving through the Caribbean Sea. The time frame is not specified, but the narrative leaves no doubt: these islands are connected by resemblance and geographical proximity.

Much has been said about island imaginary, how early modern travelers were governed by preestablished images of insularity that cast their shadows onto the encounters with supposedly remote, desert islands. What appears in Coppier's and in many other Caribbean travel accounts is a narrative of island *experience*. This is more than geography; it is what Henri Lefebvre famously called a *Production of Space* (1991). Space, Lefebvre contends, is lived before it is conceived (34). His point is to conceptualize space not as an empty or abstract category out there to be filled with meaning but as produced through practice in which imagination as well as ideology, natural space, social space, material conditions, and modes of

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production intervene (7). Such interlapping between experience and imaginary emerges in the passage describing Coppier's arrival in the Caribbean. His narrative reveals a desire for profit by taking space on the islands, but again and again peoples and geography short-circuit his intentions. Such tensions are at the heart of this chapter. Can we see effects of the archipelago in travel writing? Or, to put it in the words of Édouard Glissant, what would starting from an island mean in this context?

This first chapter aims to locally ground seventeenth-century travel writing in the Caribbean island space through a reading inspired by Glissant, taking as a point of departure his proposition that the geographical space as well as the imaginative conception of islands impact on the conceptualization of the Caribbean. This is not in itself a radical proposal. However, to acknowledge that travelers not only described island space as an object of knowledge and a place to be exploited but also found themselves influenced by this space implies a shift in perspectives on the early modern Caribbean. Put differently, starting from an island is a way to avoid using the colonial center or the Atlantic as an entry point for analyzing writings on the Caribbean.

The claim I make here is that while settlement and early colonization were forms of territorialization represented in travel writing in terms of spatial possession and control, narrative disruptions allow the tracing of how geography unsettled those processes. Descriptions of geography are circumscribed by political ambitions and by an existing island imaginary, but they also reveal the limits of such circumscriptions. The narratives show how the French were often drawn into island movements that go against the construction of a successful colonization narrative. They include accounts of indigenous ways of living in the archipelago, which hint at other presences and other forms of knowledge. Investigating the archipelagic geography is thus a crucial point of entanglement for understanding how discourse constructed power spatially but also for tracing moments of disruptions. For various reasons that will be investigated in the pages that follow, the travelers conceived of the islands in terms of a connected spatiality (Tolias 2017, 23). In the idea as well as in the object "island," a Renaissance world view informed by the early discoveries was connected with an Enlightenment conception of insularity, shaped by global explorations and colonization. Moreover, the island in itself was seen as geographically linked to other islands. In the travelogues, as we will see, this connectivity appears in passages narrating movements—journeys across the sea, between islands and islands, between islands and continents.

Because of the productive oscillation between history, geography, and imaginary, it seems in fact that the travelogues constructed the region as an archipelagic space, which finds an echo in contemporary Caribbean authors' exploration of a geopoetic thinking and writing that takes its cue from the archipelago. The concept of the archipelagic was coined by Glissant as an attempt at finding a way out of the fixity of systematic Western models for thinking. The archipelago, Glissant observes, is "diffracted," yet it constitutes a unity (2009, 47). This geography does two things for Glissant. First, it allows him to reconfigure the relationship between parts and whole while doing away with the notion of center. Second, the archipelago suggests a mobile arrangement of entities. Constellations take form depending on perspectives and positions, meaning that they are constantly reshaped even though they remain a totality. Transposed into thinking, this geography becomes for Glissant a *modus operandi* for another way of being in the world and of relating to oneself, others, and the surroundings (2009, 45). In a way, archipelagic thinking is the geographic articulation of Glissant's poetics of Relation, based on Guattari and Deleuze's concept of the rhizome (1997, 11), carving out different ways of conceiving the diversified totality by emphasizing relational singulars. Yet, working through the idea of a diversified interconnectivity of differences rather than thinking in terms of networks, which is the guiding idea in the concept of the rhizome, Glissant diverges in part from Deleuze and Guattari in that his spatialization of thought is anchored in places. The archipelago can act on thoughts as well as on people. This also impacts on form.

Glissant himself never tested the archipelagic in the context of early modern writing or history. However, he did note that what he calls the "thinking of the Atlantic Ocean," as a "symbol and a reality of power," developed later during the eighteenth century, in conjunction with "the abyss of the Slave Trade" (Glissant 2009, 49). One could argue that prior to the triangular trade, even colonizers lived Caribbean space differently. What this means is difficult to deduct from Glissant's allusive comment, and it is not up to me to speculate whether he would go as far as suggesting that seventeenth-century travel writing could be archipelagic. Nonetheless, he does, as Richard Scholar has shown (2015, 34), indirectly refer to an early modern imaginary and argues that the archipelagic is determined by societal, historical, and material aspects. On this point there are connections between Glissant's theorization and late-twentieth-century spatial theories developed by the previously mentioned Lefebvre

and, later, Michel de Certeau (1984), according to which space is primarily a construction, produced in the social sphere (Lefebvre) or through practitioners moving through a space (de Certeau). Similarily, for Glissant the archipelagic is not simply a geographical fact; it has to do with how space and time are conceived and lived, whether they are open and drawn into a process of change or not. "The archipelago," Michelle Stephens and Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel write in *Contemporary Archipelagic Thinking*, "calls for a meaning-making and rearticulation that responds to human experiences traversing space and time" (2020, 3). Archipelagic thinking, too, conceives of space as a construction, produced in terms of overlappings between the natural, the social, and the imaginative. The Glissantian approach, read through the lens of Lefebvre and de Certeau, offers a way to capture how travelers writing about the settlement period for different reasons, which I want to identify and analyze here, opt for a "push and pull between the metaphorical and the material," to construct the islands as a scene where the settlement unfolds as practice and action (Roberts and Stephens 2017, 7). The quote comes from the introduction to *Archipelagic American Studies*, used by the editors to methodologically characterize the archipelagic approach. Viewed from the crossroad between imaginary visions and material geographical entities, "the archipelago," they argue, "emerges as neither strictly natural nor as wholly cultural but always as at the intersection of the Earth's materiality and humans' penchant for metaphoricity" (Roberts and Stephens 2017, 7). This double articulation between imaginary conceptions and the actual experience of islands resonates with Lefebvre's idea of space as a production and makes the archipelagic approach particularly apt for interrogating how seventeenth-century travelers who were caught between conflicting codes of representation wrote the Caribbean archipelago.

I recognize that there are problems with this approach. Scholars of contemporary archipelagic thinking and writing attempt to trace radically new epistemologies of the archipelago in terms of "anti-explorations" (Roberts and Stephens 2017, 19).[1] In a similar vein, another important contribution to rethinking islands, Elizabeth DeLoughrey's *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (2007), considers island writing in terms of a counter-discourse. The underlying rationale in the travelogues is quite the opposite; in one way or another, all the

[1] The idea of the anti-explorer comes from Édouard Glissant. Michael Dash develops this theme in one of the articles included in *Archipelagic American Studies* (2017, 356).

travelers participated more or less directly in slavery and the expulsion of Indigenous people, and their texts discursively supported the colonial enterprise. Settlement that leads to colonization is a cruelly palpable example of the production of a space in terms of appropriation of a physical space and, ultimately, of a mental space. Nonetheless, even if the archipelagic is not here anti-explorational in the ways it is usually understood, this line of thinking allows for tracing other resonances in their writings. Regardless of how ideologically driven these texts are, travelogues show that even in the context of colonial discourses, islands should not be reduced to projections of desires or successful appropriations of territory.

In fact, such a reading would accept the premises of a colonial text and hold the story of heroic settlement as true. For this reason historian Tessa Murphy has proposed that the Caribbean should be approached as an "interconnected region rather than a set of discrete territories," which, she argues, would allow us "to understand the islands' intertwined social, economic, and political trajectories in ways that existing imperial and national histories often fail to convey" (2021, 4). Murphy reads the islands in terms of borderlands, as sites of contestation and struggle (13), constructed by the movements and interventions by the peoples active in that space. Shifting the focus from empires and nations to agents present in the region as shaping forces of the archipelagic space, she suggests that it is more relevant to speak of a "Creole archipelago" articulated between geography and the "hybrid community" that took shape on the islands. Murphy's historical study offers an important change in perception not only of the early colonial Caribbean but also of early creolization, as she brings in Indigenous interventions as productive in these processes (6–7).

The travelogues are full of passages that describe and also narrate how the region is experienced and practiced—how people act and do in space. Such passages complicate the promotional message that permeates the narratives, in showing that the way that these texts actually produce space obeys other constraints and codes. They construct the Antilles by converging spatial dimensions, including the imagination of islands (mental space) and the geographical entities (physical space), along with social forces, local, African, and European contexts, as well as material and natural conditions. The ambition here is to read the travelogues against the grain of their own colonial narrative and approach them in an archipelagic way, confronting them with the geographical and historical context that they set out to territorialize and dominate. By drawing on theories of spatial construction in narratives and in line with Jonathan Pugh's

characterization of thinking with the archipelago, I will demonstrate that the ways in which the travelers write about geographical movements of and in between islands highlight tropes of "the adaptation and transformation of material, cultural and political practices" (2013, 9). Archipelagic thinking inspires me to approach these texts in terms of island movements rather than to assign them a static form and meaning. It is a tool to unlock them and understand how they dealt with an archipelagic reality as well as to explore strategies to rethink early colonial discourses on the Caribbean from an inner perspective. The argument builds on the hypothesis that exploring the ways in which travelers linked to and accounted for geographic space can offer an understanding of how they sought to represent settlement as both domination and process, both a space for cultural mixing and for cultural domination, by bordering and mapping. Their writings are profoundly anchored in geography, and their engagements with social and natural space often destabilize the narrative of colonial control and compete with the imaginative space of insular representations that also inform the texts.

The malleability of travel writing allows for one text to contain several forms and structures in one, turning the text itself into a zone of diversity. My contention is that, whether conscious or not, the traveler-writers use this internal formal multiplicity to think through and experiment with the experience of space through writing. In "Experience and Knowledge in the Baroque," Anthony J. Cascardi asks what the connectivity between the world, thinking, and forms of expression would imply for the construction of knowledge and experience (2019, 459). Following Cascardi, in this chapter I will make the Baroque operative as a concept to investigate those links between geography, the ways in which it is lived and expressed, and the formation of knowledge. Geographical form, a certain "archipelagraphy," to use Elizabeth DeLoughrey's term (2001), becomes one of the expressive forms of the early colonial French Caribbean. Similarly, Glissant uses the notion of the Baroque in convergence with archipelagic thinking and creolization by underscoring proliferating differences, movability, and transitional assemblages lacking a fixed center. But more importantly, the Baroque allows me to see the travelogues' transformative potentiality as an effect of the archipelagic while at the same time not eschewing the power dimensions inherent in this writing. Perhaps these early modern colonial texts can even shed light on our own presentism and other theoretical fallacies. If these narratives can be considered as part of the longer history of this archipelagic region, then clearly the concept entails processes that

might turn ferocious and oppressive too. Writing from the settlement enables us to measure the violent grounds of archipelagic thinking and thereby perhaps distance it from the utopian turn it sometimes takes. It can be a careful reminder not to eulogize archipelagic thinking.

This chapter is divided into four parts. In the first section, I will map out the seventeenth-century island imaginary in order to demonstrate how the travelers put it to strategic use. This will lead me in the second section to focus on dimensions of that strategy that both sustain and unsettle territorial claims, looking at naming in particular. The third and fourth sections investigate the representations of experiences of island space, starting with an analysis of topographic writing, which I align with de Certeau's notion of mapping and, moving on toward an investigation of how the travelers displayed an engaged perspective of island movements. This approach recalls de Certeau's notion of spatial practice and draws the narratives to an exploration of other people's, notably Indigenous, experiences of the archipelago.

Representing and Thinking with Islands

Connected mainly to the idea of transformation, the island was a highly polysemic topos in seventeenth-century French culture. For Pascal it represented imprisonment, whereas for Mme de Sevigné it was a refuge (Plazanet 2017, 238). Jean Rousset places it as an exemplary site for the Baroque: it was the "image of metamorphosis" (1953, 29), capturing and emanating Baroque themes such as change, inconsistency, appearance, fugitivity, and instability (8). Other scholars also confirm that, in Baroque aesthetics, the island was often depicted as the place of pleasure but also of illusions and uncertainty (Ernest 1995; Fougère 1995). The insular chronotope was an isolated time-space prone to description rather than narration, making room for a parenthetical story within the story, where space often turned into a mirror of the slippery terrain of morals and human desires. The island was thus a place either for pleasure or for reflection, due to the undecideability of its nature. Such an aesthetic conception of insularity was deeply anchored in ancient natural history, notably in the theories of Pliny the Elder according to which the island was associated with inconsistency (Lestringant 1993, 42). As a model for thinking, the island was turned into a societal laboratory, famously in Thomas More's *Utopia* or Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, and these social articulations of island imaginary were, as pointed out by Richard Scholar in his reading of

Glissant, associated with the sixteenth-century European presence in the Americas (2015, 38). In short, with its malleable and changing characteristics, Frank Lestringant argues, island space lacked a coherent symbolic meaning and could be transformed into anything; it was the perfect space for projections of desires and fears as well as the construction of knowledge (1993, 304, 320).

A quick survey of dictionaries from the time confirms that, for a seventeenth-century traveler, islands and insularity could mean many things. The entry *Isle* in the French Academy's dictionary from 1694 gives the following definition: an island is a "piece of land surrounded by water on all sides."[2] The almost ontological connection with water further underscores the island as a site of instability, as if it always floated and moved like the liquid surrounding it (Rousset 1953, 143). Another definition from an earlier dictionary, *Thresor de la langue francoyse tant ancienne que moderne* (1606), establishes a metaphorical link between the island and the house: "Both islands and insulary houses are those around which one can circle the four directions without being hindered by other structures."[3] An island-house stands alone. One can reach it from all sides, suggesting an openness and an invitation to exchange. The very nature that distinguishes islands from other geographies is the absence of "obstacles" (*empeschement*), not their isolation from other places. The persistent use of the plural *Isles* testifies to this tendency. An island is not circumscribed by its apparent spatial limits because it is a multiple and open spatiality, understood in relation to a set of islands and to the water that surrounds it, which opens toward all possible orientations. The evocation of *one* island always points toward other islands, toward the archipelago.

As the spelling changed from *Isle* to *île* in the second half of the eighteenth century, the island gradually became defined in terms of isolation. In European literature the island was increasingly imagined in terms of insularity, as a deserted place, cut off from its surroundings, yet always ready to receive another Robinson Crusoe; an imaginary that holds a central place still today, as islands are becoming increasingly vulnerable due to the climate crisis. When Grant McCall in 1996 made the case for nissology, he did so on the grounds that "[c]ontinental dwellers have always sought to control and possess islands and the very word conjures romantic

[2] Espace de terre entouré d'eau de tous costez.

[3] Isles aussi ou maisons insulaires, sont celles à l'entour desquelles on peut tournoyer par quatre voyes, sans empeschement d'autre edifice.

ideals, the simple life and almost mythological charm" (1996, 75). Likewise, in early modern times, as Jean-Michael Racault (2010) rightly observes, the equation between insularity and isolation quickly became prevalent in fictional texts as well as in the writings of real travelers. Racault takes the example of French voyagers to the Mascarene Islands and shows how they drew from biblical and ancient myths to build their conception of the island as an unpopulated space—a confined area where European man may start anew, reinvent himself, or use it for profit.

Travel writers to the Caribbean borrowed elements from the utopic and combined them with biblical references to the earthly paradise and ancient myths of paradise about the Hesperides and the Golden Age. Hyacinthe de Caen, the first Capucin missionary to travel with Ensambuc and the *Compagnie des Isles de l'Amérique* in 1626, depicts Saint-Christophe as the land of honey and gold:

> One may very well call paradise a delicious place where there is an eternal summer, always green fields, flowers and fruits in trees that are always ripe, the months and the seasons always equal, animals always in love and breeding continuously and without getting tired, much like the earth in her production of plants.[4] (2014, 157)

Indirectly referring to Columbus' assertion that he had found paradise in the Americas, Hyacinthe de Caën promotes the newly established colonies to an audience in France, hoping that the imaginary of the Cockayne country would seduce commoners to settle in the islands and wealthy men to invest in the companies. Further in the same text he compares life on the islands to that of the Golden Age, using the economy of exchange that dominated indigenous island cultures as an argument for his comparison (2014, 160). The irony is, of course, that while texts like this flourished in Paris, they did not have a significant impact on migration to the islands or on the literary imagination, as I discussed in the introduction. Nevertheless, the passage can be counted among the most striking examples of what Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant in their 1989

[4] [On peut bien] appeller paradis un lieu delicieux où est un esté perpetuel, tousjours la verdure aux champs, les fleurs et les fruits aux arbres qui sont tousjours en seve, les mois et les saisons toutes esgalles, tousjours les animaux en amour, qui engendrent continuellement sans se lasser, en plus que la terre en la production de ses plantes.

A copy of this passage appeared later in a promotional text published in *Mercure de France*.

Créolité-manifesto called a “paradisiac writing,” which they hold as typical for (colonial) representations of the region (1989, 15).

Clearly, island imaginary gave travelers certain forms that they could use in their representations of a foreign yet not unknown region like the Caribbean. However, looking closer at longer, published travelogues, it becomes apparent that the island imaginary does not function as a discourse in the Foucauldian sense. Rather than providing the basis for the construction of knowledge and power formations, this imaginary is used by the travelers to frame the text or parts of it. Island imaginary is better considered as a malleable trope that appears in particular passages and serves specific purposes. In publications from the 1640s to the 1660s the philosophical and scientific debate around whether the tropical zone was habitable or not was still accurate, and to validate their observations on the islands, travelers alluded to this debate. At the same time, insularity was presented as a space of adventure or horror, where travelers were tested like heroes in a novel.

In other words, there was not one but many island imaginaries that could be actualized within the same text. More importantly, island imaginary, both as locus amoenus and as locus horribilis, was present but did not permeate or structure the travelogues. De Caen’s text is a significant exception since it was published in a journal with the explicit intention to promote the islands and attract future settlers. In longer texts, passages alluding to paradise or tapping into visions of utopia tended to be brief and disconnected from the main narrative. Island imaginary thereby appears as an identifiable element; it stands out and operates on another register than the account of the very experience of sojourning in and travelling to the islands.

The evocation of paradise can, for instance, have a specific narrative function, like when the travelers first catch sight of the Antilles. Automatically, paradise is mentioned to create a sense of discovery and resurrection. When Du Tertre sets eyes on the islands after the long and dangerous voyage across the Atlantic, he vividly paints an image of people rising from the dead and dressing up in a pompous ceremony to land on the shores of Martinique, as if they entered the gates of Paradise (1648, 24). Even when the experience of arrival was presented on a more personal note, like in Biet’s account, the image of Eden appears: “I can’t express the people’s joy when they saw this beautiful land, because one couldn’t use a better comparison to depict that which appeared to us from the sea than the paths of a beautiful garden, very well kept, all this great land from

Cape Orange all the way to Cayenne seemed very flat to us, but without culture and little inhabited" (1664, 71).[5] Caribbean nature is described through a comparative lens. Geography is represented in terms of a pastoral landscape, signaled in the mention of "paths" recalling a "beautiful garden," but a landscape that lacks culture and people, as if God alone had intervened in this land for the Europeans to cultivate. Allusions to a paradisiacal island imaginary are fundamentally colonial: the landscape resembles a garden but needs the perfectibility of the European settlers to become one. Clearly then, island imaginary is imbricated into the history and future of the settlement without being directly referential: it is not actualized by describing the space that lies before them but, rather, an idea of this space. When Biet alludes to gardens to capture the emotions of the passengers seeing land and to point forward to the settlement to come, those gardens do not necessarily reflect the landscape that actually lay in front of him. Rather, they allude to a preestablished image of an ideal insular space. Island imaginary functions as an ornamental addition to the body of the travel narrative and can in most cases be localized in prefaces and introductory passages that favor a more literary register.

Rochefort begins his natural history by quoting the idyllic poem "Moïse sauve" and then states that the lands in the Caribbean archipelago are as beautiful and as fertile as any place in France (1658, 5). Du Tertre paints the image of a terrestrial Eden as an introduction to the chapter on the "natural inhabitants of the islands": "The air in the torrid zone is the purest, the healthiest, & the most tempered of all airs," he claims, adding that "the land is a little paradise always green, & sprinkled with the most beautiful waters in the world" (1667 t2, 356–357).[6] The passage serves to create an exotic décor, an entry that signals Du Tertre's position vis-à-vis

[5] Ie ne sçaurois exprimer la ioye de tout nostre monde, à la veuë de cette belle terre, car l'on ne peut mieux comparer ce qui nous parut tout le long de la mer, qu'aux allées d'un beau Iardin, tres bien entretenuës, tout ce grand païs depuis le Cap d'orange jusques à Cayenne paroist fort plat, mais il est sans culture & fort peu habité.

[6] The passage in French is worth quoting at length:

> Or comme j'ay fait voir que l'air de la Zone torride est le plus pur, le plus sain & le plus temperé de tous les airs, & que la terre y est un petit Paradis tousiours verdoyant, & arousé des plus belles eaux du monde, il est à propos de faire voir dans ce traité, que les Sauvages de ces Isles sont les plus contens, les plus heureux, les moins vicieux, les plus sociables, les moins contrafaits, & les moins tourmentez de maladies, de toutes les nations du monde.

the Indigenous: what the reader can expect is a portrait of a noble people. The idyllic geography functions as an argument with a religious and aesthetic rationale: the beautiful nature reflects good character and proves that God has not abandoned these peoples even if they do not know Catholicism. Contrary to what some researchers have suggested in passing (Tocanne 1978, 199), the passage has nothing to do with describing the missionary's lived experience with Natives or island nature. Instead, it serves to place the Caribs in a paradisiacal nature in order to inject himself into the contemporary debate around the status of the Indigenous population. In the 1654 edition of *Histoire générale des Antilles*, Du Tertre explicitly takes a stand against those who considered the Amerindians to be monstrous and affirms the discourse of the "Noble savage," inherited from Montaigne's "Of Cannibals" and "Of Coaches" as well as Jean de Léry's voyage to Brazil, even though none of these sources are cited in the text. Seventeen years later, in the 1667 edition, the same arguments are underpinned by a spatial imagination, rooted in the idea of the tropical island as an earthly Eden. This is crucial: enhancing the beauty of the islands enables Du Tertre to craft geographical and natural arguments for considering the Natives as humans and equally protected by God as Europeans. But they are circumscribed by this imaginative spatiality that evacuates all actual experience of that place.

Introductions like these serve as a *captatio benevolae*, attracting the reader and setting up a discursive environment that allows the missionary to develop his anthropological description of the Natives. The narrator speaks directly to the audience, who expected something ornamental—as an echo of the frontispiece and other illustrations included in the book—obeying visual rules that required the writer not to shock. It is part of what Sylvie Requemora calls a "prefacial game" (*jeu préfaciel* 2012, 227), following a rhetorical register and not the register of the natural and moral history itself. In fact, both the historical and the anthropological parts of Du Tertre's immense book would contradict the idealized picture of the Carib world given in the introduction to the section, as he does not refrain from telling about the complications in Indigenous society and about often violent and unequal interactions between Caribs and French (Fig. 2.1).

But if the island imaginary is a literary construction to either move the reader or intervene in a debate, it has little to do with travelling and sojourning in the Antilles. It is not the traveler who filters his direct experience with the island through this imaginary. Rather, it is an interface,

Fig. 2.1 Du Tertre *Histoire générale des Antilles* (1667). Sebastien Leclerc. Visite des Sauvages aux François. (Source: gallica.bnf.fr/Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Public domain)

negotiating the subjective and the objective, destined to help the reader process the representation of faraway lands both aesthetically and cognitively. It serves as a code to make that which is described identifiable and enjoyable. The travelers were aware of this, and so was the audience. Eden obliges when writing from the tropics. Some travelers even express irritation in the face of the imperative to evoke paradise when writing about the

tropics. In a clever turn Pelleprat mentions paradise only to say that the islands are not paradisiacal: "It is not that this temperature omits everything that is crude and irritating in the Americas: but where can one find one country on the earth that doesn't have incommodities? There are no more earthly paradises, or places where one doesn't suffer" (1658, 3).[7] He knows what the reader wants and while meeting these expectations Biet concludes that they are wrong; the Antilles is like any other place.

As imaginative as these kinds of introductory passages are, they play an important part in the representational fabrication of the Caribbean. Arguments like the one from Du Tertre's introduction quoted above, anchored in island imagination, were at the basis for the entire mission. Yet they only articulate *one* dimension of spatial representation, which encountered its limits in front of other dimensions, historical but also geographical. Such limits, together with the transgression of them, appear if we look at the ways in which the region is designated in the texts. Naming is a way to assert discursive control. The imaginary plays into those performances, but at the encounter with the multiplicity of islands and with the social construction of the island space through history as well as politics, that control fails to assert itself. Instead we see the emergence of what Brian Russel Roberts describes as the "multilanguage historical processes that undergird the archipelagic narrative" (2020, 85).

Naming Islands

The small islands, placed as an arch between the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, are called the Lesser Antilles. Views on the etymology of this toponymy were divided (Babcock 1920; Crone 1938). According to some, the name comes from the myth of the island of Anthilia. When Du Tertre sets out to explain the naming of the region he starts from a descriptive ellipse, avoiding going into detail because others have dwelled on this before him. What he does note is that the islands are not only named after the myth. Geography also plays its part. "There are not many peoples who don't know," he writes, "that [they are called Antilles] because they are the spaces first encountered by those who make the journey to America, & that composing with other islands with which they are entangled, like an oblique

[7] Ce n'est pas que ce temperament oste tout ce qu'il y a de rude, & de fâcheux dans l'Amérique: mais où trouvera-t-on un pays sur la terre qui n'ait ses incommoditez? Il n'est plus de Paradis terrestre, ny de lieux où l'on n'ait rien à soufrir.

barrier, [the islands] cover the entire stretch of this vast Gulf of Mexico" (1667 t2, 2).[8] Du Tertre here draws from the Portuguese etymology, later noticed by Humboldt (Babcock 1920, 113–114), compounding the words ante and *illa* (island), understood as "the island out before," an interpretation also accepted by Labat fifty years later (1722 t4, 332). When chosing this interpretation over others, more symbolically charged and tied to European island imaginary, he emphasizes the importance of island geography and of the region as a produced space. The "Caribbean" or the "West Indies" are other names—fraught with uncertainties and cognitive mistakes—that hold history, imaginaries, and (dis)locations. In the travelogues we also find the alternative naming "Cannibal Islands" (*Isles Cannibales*), which testifies to yet another misconception about the Indigenous populations. Evoking the supposed presence of man-eaters draws attention to danger and adventure while morally and ethically justifying the expulsion of these supposedly unlawful, "barbaric" people. Moreover, the evocation teases the curious reader and provides intertextual references to island imaginary directly linked to the Americas. Together geography, mythology, and desire play into the representation of the region, suggesting that the islands were indeed regarded as social spaces rather than blank isolated entities onto which anything could be projected.

In fact, during the initial period of the settlement it was politically risky to represent the Antilles as empty spaces, free for anyone (European) to conquer. Such representations could be seen as a direct insult to Spain, who still had claims on the territory. In 1635, the same year as the creation of the *Compagnie des Isles de l'Amérique*, France had entered in the Thirty Years War against Spain, siding with the Protestants. In this context, Richelieu did not want any accounts from the settlement to be published to avoid further complications with Spain (Boucher 2008, 67). When the accounts were finally published after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the political situation was different. Even so the Caribbean was still a domain of sensitive political debates, and travelers could not ignore the colonial history that preceded the French involvement in the region. This partly explains why Du Tertre begins the 1667 edition of his *Histoire Générale des Antilles habitées par les François* by speaking of the Spanish conquest.

[8] Il y a peu de personnes qui ne sçachent, que c'est parce qu'elles sont rencontrées les premieres par ceux qui font le voyage de l'Amérique, & que composant avec les autres, parmy lesquelles elles sont meslées, comme une barriere oblique, elles couvrent l'estenduë de ce vaste golfe du Mexique.

He recognizes Spain's first territorial claims but then moves on to dispute them on the grounds of their negligence. The Spanish, Du Tertre argues, might have "discovered" the islands, but being too ferocious and too hungry for gold, they failed to see the treasures hidden in the details and simply left the archipelago in chaos. This narrative undergirds the entire text. Throughout the pages of his natural and moral history, Du Tertre demonstrates that the French *rediscovered* the islands, thanks to missionaries such as himself. They took the time to extract knowledge and saw much more than the Spanish ever did since they were blinded by their thirst for profit and expansion. His argument is spatial and cultural: the desire and more or less systematic search for knowledge will lead to an intimate relationship, not only with the people, but with the land. This set the tone for and justified the history of French settlement, and similar ideas were voiced by other travelers.

Such "fictions of reciprocity" as Garraway (2005, 42) calls travelers' depictions of Franco-Carib relations at this time, were indeed also geographically motivated. The travelers displayed an image of an engaged relationship to the lands, which would give them not only an epistemic but also a moral priority over the Spanish in particular and, in extension, over the Dutch and the British to claim the islands. Breton's dictionary, for instance, contains various indigenous expressions for the different types of islands. He highlights vernacular words testifying to a history of the island as a space of conflict that both includes and precedes the European intrusion: "you yourself, inhabit this island," "I have inhabited it first," "they left to get provisions from another island" (1999, 207).[9] Expressions like these show that the islands were perceived as contested spaces; travelers, and particularly missionaries, knew that the Indigenous people claimed priority based on the argument that they were there first. Needless to say, Europeans did not buy this argument, and it mattered little in the territorial conquest, but they were visibly aware that they intruded in islands inhabited by others. In the section on the morals of the natural inhabitants, Chapter Eleven, following a short "vocabulary" in vernacular language, Rochefort underscores that the Natives voiced criticism against the Europeans for having occupied their native lands:

[9] Habite-toi même cette Ile; je l'ai habité premier que toi; ils sont allés à la provision dans une autre Ile.

> You have chased me […] from Saint-Christophe, Nevis, Montserrat, Saint Martin, Antigua, Guadeloupe, Barbados, Saint Eustache, & c., which do not belong to you and to which you could not have any legitimate claims. And you keep threatening me every day to take the few lands I still have from me. What will the miserable Carib become? Will he one day have to live in the sea with the fish? Your land must without any doubt be very bad for you since you leave it to come here and take mine: or are you so malicious that you come like this to persecute me out of pleasure? This complaint does not sound very savage.[10] (1658, 403)

The critique is directed toward European expansionism. The collective voice of the Caribs talks to the collective body of Europeans taking over their lands. In this vocabulary, as in Breton's, it becomes clear that Carib language expresses a possessive relationship to land, even if the conception of possession differs from the French and is more related to the used value of the land than with property. Nonetheless, Natives claiming territorial possession is at odds with the general European preconception, tied to island imaginary and to notions of Paradise and the Golden Age as discussed earlier, that these people had no sense of property. At the same time, it is not clear what possession meant in this context. Vocabulary for going to other islands for provisions indicates that the meaning has less to do with owning than with inhabiting a space. Islands were used for different purposes, suggesting that they did consider the region to be interconnected rather than constituted by separated islands that belonged to a particular group. Marie Galante is a case in point. Well before the French succeeded in settling on the island, they were aware of its role for the Indigenous populations; several travelers mention that in vernacular language the island is called the garden. So even islands that were not populated when a colony of settlers arrived were seen as part of a Native and a colonial space.

This seemingly lucid and sensitive reading of the islands and the ways in which locals lived them clearly did not hinder the French from seeing

[10] Tu m'as chassé […] de Saint Christophe, de Niéves, de Monserrat, de Saint Martin, d'Antigua, de la Gardeloupe, de la Barboude, de Saint Eustache, & c. qui ne t'appartiennent pas & où tu ne pouvois légitimenent prétendre. Et tu me menaces encore tous les jours de m'ôter ce peu de païs qui me reste. Que deviendra le misérable Caraïbe? Faudrait-il qu'il aille habiter la mer avec les poissons? Ta terre est, sans doute, bien mauvaise, puisque tu la quittes pour venir prendre la mienne: Ou tu as bien de la malice de venir ainsi de gayeté de cœur me persecuter. Cette plainte n'a pas un air trop Sauvage.

themselves as entitled to possess and spatiality restructure the archipelago. The question of the Natives' origin is of importance here. In the sixteenth century, knowing where they came from had a religious dimension: were they God's children or not? During the seventeenth century this question transitions into becoming a political issue of rights to a territory. In proving that the natives were not "the natural inhabitants" of the islands and that they came from the North or South American continents, Europeans had a claim to the territories. They no longer appeared as brutal conquerors; they simply took over islands that had no natural inhabitants. This is crucial for the construction of a colonial discourse that would not run counter to the idea of France being the country of liberty that would not enslave or chase other people from their lands. Labat, in his travelogue from 1722, gave voice to this political transition: "the peoples Christopher Columbus found on the small islands of the east, which have been called Antilles, because they are windwards from the large islands and because coming from Europe one finds them first, were not natural inhabitants of the land" (1722 t 4, 332).[11]

The tension between recognition and possession is played out in one of the most fundamental gestures of travel and domination: topographic naming. This performative speech act of possession and of knowledge is at the core of the colonial Caribbean experience: Columbus going from one island to another, raising a cross and renaming them according to Old World social orders. "The baroque is engendered by the need to name things," as Alejo Carpentier writes (2010, 262) referring to naming as an act of power leading to linguistic excess and a sense of doubling. However, even if this performance was effective and real, another, local naming remained in use for at least two centuries. The brutal conquest by the Spanish did not eliminate Amerindian toponymy in one blow; Caribs kept their way of speaking about islands and the French believed that the vernacular naming could give important insights about the lands. Breton's dictionary testifies to this, not only concerning toponomy but also when considering the quantity of terms relating to the archipelagic space. What is interesting is that while vernacular names lived on (at least for a while), other European nations would in fact revisit the local naming as a means

[11] Les Sauvages que Christophle Colomb trouva dans les petites Isles de l'Est, qu'on a appellé Antisles, parce qu'elles sont au vent des grandes Isles, & qu'en venant d'Europe on les trouve les premieres, n'étoient point les naturels du païs. Murphy underscores that this origin story has been confirmed by modern archeology (2021, 19).

to question Spanish dominance and put it to strategic use. In the travelogues, Spanish names are acknowledged as official, but they are juxtaposed with the vernacular names, indirectly contesting Spain's legitimacy. In his short account, Hyacinthe de Caën writes that "Gardelouppe" [sic] and "Martinique" were names that the Spanish had imposed upon the islands when they passed by "without even descending on the islands or inhabiting them" (2014, 153). He accuses the Spanish of having claimed territorial possession simply by naming islands. The name in itself is not enough to have the right to a territory, Hyachinte de Caen suggests, and their neglect leaves a lacuna, which paves the way for French settlement.

Paradoxically, rivalry with Spain opened up for an exploration of vernacular naming, which also has a disruptive effect in the travelogues. Some travelers drew from local toponymy in order to construct a story of a more intimate relationship with the archipelagic reality of the region. They acknowledged the Spanish presence but sought toponymic knowledge from the Natives, thus showing that their physical and epistemologic claim of the islands was more complete and, most of all, more engaged. In his dictionary, Raymond Breton starts with the entrance for "island, my island," *Oúbao, noubáoulou*, and then goes on to give the local names of all of the islands of the Antilles in alphabetical order (1999, 204–207). Less knowledgeable travelers, too, were clearly informed by local toponomy. The anonymous soldier-writer in Fleury's crew, who had no territorial agenda, gives a list of the islands with the vernacular name juxtaposed with the Spanish: "Dominica, *Holotobouli*; Martinia, *Yoannacaira*; Saint Lucia or Saint Allouzie, *Yoannalau*; Mariglianti, or land of cotton, *Aulinagan*; Guadeloupe, *Caroucuira*; Saint Vincent, *Yoalamarqua*" (2002, 115).

Whether intended or not, lists like this one demonstrate that the archipelago was perceived as a place of cultural crossings and power struggles. Juxtaposed names transform into sites of contestation, revealing how the islands are deeply embedded in history. In the section containing the topography of the islands, Du Tertre claims that he had the intention of describing Saint-Christophe as it appeared prior to the arrival of the Europeans. However, a description of nature in its "wild" state would only repel the reader, so instead he opts for depicting the island as it was at the moment when the English and the French began their settlement. From there he places the island on the map and then discusses the island's name:

> The Savages call it in their Carib language *Liamaiga*. The common opinion is that Christopher Columbus, this illustrious Argonaut who discovered the island imposed his name onto it: even if people have tried to persuade the simple minded that one imposed the name of Saint-Christopher onto it because one sees in the middle of this island a small mountain on the top of one of the highest mountains, & that one could say that one mountain carries the other on its back, like the painters represent Jesus Christ on the gigantic shoulders of Saint Christopher; but those who charge these reveries onto credoulus people, do not have better foundations for their stories than those who perceive a thousand chimeras in the clouds.[12] (1667, vol 2, 6)

The vernacular name comes first, then the story of Columbus imposing his own name onto the island. Du Tertre then recalls another, bibliogeographical explanation to the name, which he quickly refutes. The anecdote leaves traces of an environmental logic to naming that reoccurs in several travelogues. While naming was an act of possession, it was also a subject of debate, which suggests that the islands were not necessarily conceived as virgin or paradisiac. On the contrary, there is a fundamental contradiction here, which reveals how the islands intervene in the oscillatory movement between control and unsettlement. This aim to dominate a European power by the means of the language of those who previously inhabited the islands plants a seed of doubt in the French's claim.

In these toponymic layers of islands, space resonates in the text as if the process of history set another movement in motion, that of disruptions. For rather than stabilizing the referent, the multiple names that accumulate in the archipelago tend to destabilize the link to the referent. Instead of a single colonial narrative, the layered naming gives the texts archipelagic multidirectional orientations. We see it again in Du Tertre's topography of Guadeloupe. He starts by evoking the island that the Caribs call *Karukera* and the Europeans name Guadeloupe, and then he explains that this toponomy comes from the many fresh water sources that are found there. These recall an ancient and famous author named Lopez, so "*agua*

[12] Les Sauvages l'appellent dans leur Langue Caraibe *Liamaiga*. La commune opinion est, que Christophe Colombe, cét illustre Argonaute qui l'a découverte luy a imposé son nom: quoy qu'on ayt voulu persuader aux simples qu'on luy a imposé le nom de saint Christophe à cause qu'on apperçoit au milieu de cette Isle une petite montagne sur la croupe d'une des plus hautes, & qu'on diroit qu'elle la porte sur son dos, comme les Peintres représentent Iesus-Christ sur les épaules gigantines de saint Christophe; mais ceux qui debitent ces resveries au peuple assez credule, ne sont pas mieux fondez, que ceux qui se forgent milles differentes chimeres dans les nuës.

de Lopez" transformed into Guadeloupe. But this etymology is uncertain, Du Tertre notes. Others claim that the island got its name because it resembles the Notre Dame of Guadeloupe in Spain (Du Tertre 1667 t2, 10). Once again, the origin of the name disappears through the accumulation of names and naming. The only stable toponym is that of *Karukera*, but this name belongs to the past. Surely, the passage is no doubt an example of how the missionary, by using his knowledge of the region, can contest the Spanish domination. Nevertheless, the result here is also that the connection between name and place is uncertain.

Several semiotic and orthographic transitions occur when an oral name is transcribed into another, written language in the early modern Caribbean context (L'Étang 2000). Raymond Breton often admits having misunderstood the Natives and taken one island for another. Sometimes, linguistic confusion was the source for indirect criticism of other travelers, such as when Biet recounts the anecdote of Yucatan, a word that presumably means "What are you saying?" in the vernacular but that the Spanish mistook for a toponymy. The anonymous soldier of Carpentras confused the word *huoragano*, meaning hurricane, with a geographical location (2002, 310). Breton, again, cites *sulauiga*, which supposedly meant "land of salt" and stood as the Natives' name of an island close to Saint-Christophe (possibly today's Saba), as an example of another type of topographical error. In fact, *sulauiga* is not an Indigenous name, according to Breton. It is a creolized name, derived from the Spanish "sal." On another occasion, he suggests that the Natives do not distinguish Saint Martin, Saint Barthelémy, and Saba from one another, but in the next sentence, he admits that he does not know what the Caribs call these islands. As far as he understands, they seem to be designated with the word for "eel" (Breton 1999, 206). Names of things and places merge, and the missionary is left to guess.

Even in these colonial texts, naming is not only an act of possession; it becomes a site of uncertainty and hybridity, and it is an act that has different functions and effects. The vernacular name, for example, connotes a strong local attachment, attesting to the knowledge of the traveler in question at the same time as it allows the reader to temporarily transport him or herself to the faraway places described. On this point, real and imagined space converge in the name. For other travelers who would consult the texts before embarking for the Caribbean, toponomy is useful information. However, for a reader unfamiliar with the sound of the local language and not acquainted with cartography, the role of the local name

would be different. To such reader it would not first and foremost denote a place. Rather, it would tickle the imagination so that the reader can picture a tropical island. In this particular reception context, the vernacular toponymy loses its deictic function and produces imaginative spatialities.

In other words, the desire for domination motivates the act of naming, but as the names multiply, the referent—the islands—seems to escape. The names often connotate an elsewhere. This is valid not only for the European toponymy imposing an order on the Old World but also, differently, for the native names. Studying Breton's dictionary, Julian Granberry and Gary Vescelius conclude that the semiotic of vernacular names in the Caribbean often reveal a directional quality, indicating the position of the island in question in relation to other islands, the winds, and the water that surround it (2004, 68–75). Here, the islands are conceived not as isolated entities but in an archipelagic sense, contained in the name. What the French voyagers add is a temporal dimension. In so doing, they also conceptualize the islands in relation to the surroundings in an archipelagic fashion but for reasons that are ultimately colonial: mapping the territory in order to get an idea of how to better control the region, identifying which islands are interesting for exploitation, and so on. Nonetheless, the conglomeration of names in various languages, and more precisely the accumulation of performative acts of naming, which reveal competing etymologies, inscribe the geographical archipelagic sensibility into a historical archipelagic sensibility: these are sites of cultural and linguistic crossings that carry traces of the peoples claiming the space. The islands become floating signifiers in a language game of power but also of incontrollable mixing. The vernacular name points here *and* there but also translates into a spatial practice of island hopping.

In fact, if, as suggested by Severo Sarduy, during the sixteenth century the notion of the Baroque "confronted with the intertwining languages of America (the codes of pre-Columbian knowledge) [and] Spanish (codes of European culture) found itself duplicated" (2010, 281), the seventeenth century travel writing proliferates and repeats the doubling. The process is geographically inscribed, provoking a Baroque expressivity in the travelogues. Adding the doubling and the repetitions, such Baroque expressivity disconnects the word from the referent while connecting to the world. It becomes a kind of "island grammar" or a geographic creolization process in Glissant's sense of the term, constructed as a series of overlapping additions. Behind the attempt at naming to give form and control looms a transformativity born out of the encounter with the

islands. I will investigate the linguistic implications of such crossings in Chap. 4, but here pertaining to island space, we can note that the abundance of languages is deeply enmeshed with both politics (territorial competition) and geography (the islands repeating themselves in the archipelagic chain) and has implications for the conception of the region. Through these acts of naming, the Caribbean emerges as a social and historical space, produced in the encounters between imagination, geography, and practices, and not as a set of isolated islands ready to be conquered. Indeed, when opening up travel writing to the archipelagic, it becomes possible, as Michelle Stephens and Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel suggest, to see that the "pluriversal etymology" not only decenters the colonial narrative; it also allows us to think about various locations as simultaneously acting "in concert" (2020, 9).

The writing of the islands is thus constituted as a palimpsest, where names are interchangeable and written onto each other. We are far from the imaginary of the deserted, feminized, and "virgin" island, which is undoubtedly one of the strongest features of insular visions in the early modern era notably in literature (Lestringant 2002, 62). As Georges Tolias rightly observes, the equation between insularity and isolation has overshadowed our understanding of islands (Tolias 2017, 22). Such readings confuse representational space with lived space. And yet, we tend to take this dominating imaginary of the island as an indicator of how travelers experienced it as social and natural space. But the archipelagic approach allows us to trace how early modern Caribbean texts simultaneously point toward another conceptualization of the insular space, which is both determined by the imaginary and by the geography. In fact, whereas the island trope was mainly directed toward the reader, the establishment in itself was lived and depicted as profoundly contradictory. When the French travelers came to the islands in the wake of the Spanish conquest, they entered into territorial dynamics that were already put into motion well before the arrival of Columbus, even if the *conquista* decisively and violently intervened in Indigenous society and intensified the process of cultural crossings. In the production of space, the travelers themselves as well as other French people who figure in the narratives had to engage with already-existing forms of social life (Spanish, Indigenous, buccaneers, and a new but at the same time part of social life: slavery), and with geographies and natures barely known to them. So while travelers sought forms to circumscribe the islands, the intervention of geography and social space disrupted the solid construction of a French Caribbean.

Mapping Islands

For those sailing to the Americas, the first islands travelers encountered were not Caribbean: ships going from Northern Europe first stopped at Madeira, the Azores or the Canary Islands. Some sailed as far south as Cape Verde. The Antilles were also perceived as the "opposite islands" (Babcock 1920, 117); as part of a globally encompassing archipelago. Islands, Guillaume Coppier writes in his account from 1645, are harbors on the dangerous ocean (1645, 4). The stops allowed travelers to restock the ship with fresh water and food; passengers could rest and trade. Or, from the perspective of enslaved Africans who did not yet know the extent of their misfortune, the first island in the Atlantic became a port to hell.

By the first half of the seventeenth century, commercial and political structure determining transatlantic interrelations appeared as disorderly and diffuse rather than triangular. There was not yet a continuous flow between Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe, with France as its center, which would shape the French Atlantic Triangle (Miller 2008). The reason was both material and epistemological. Navigation was challenging in the early seventeenth century. Even experienced travelers like Du Tertre, who had served in the Dutch marine and had sailed to Greenland before entering the Order of the Friars, dreaded the sea. Man is not made for navigation, he notes in the passage detailing his travels back and forth between the islands and France (1654, 90). Hyachinte de Caen writes that going to the Caribbean is like the voyage beyond (2014, 157). Coppier calls the ship a tomb and dreams of islands as the ship crosses the ocean (1645, 3–5). Travelers were under the impression of facing a double void in the abyss of the ocean and in the unknown that was ahead of them, a fear and excitement that they acted out through a rite of passage called the "baptism of the tropics," described by all travelers in more or less detail. In a carnivalesque ceremony, those who had never crossed the tropics were baptized with sea water and had to pay a symbolic sum to the captain. Commenting on the history of the rite, Du Tertre suggests that its true motive was psychological, a performance to sublimate the fear of passing to the other side (1667 t2, 46–47). Like a baptized child, the person crossing the line is born again and ready to face the new world.[13] Drawing

[13] That this explanation had validity is clear: the passage where Du Tertre analyzes the rite is reprinted in the French translation of Exquemelin's adventures of the buccaneers in 1686; see my analysis (2020, 137–141). For further studies of the *baptême des tropiques*, see Sophie Linon (1990); Simon J. Bronner (2006); Michael Harrigan (2019).

such symbolic borders that needed to be transgressed is another way to break down the immensity of the Atlantic. Likewise, thinking with islands made it possible to grasp the infinitely multiplying world and experiment with fragments in order to better conceptualize the unknown (Lestringant 2002, 153).

Elizabeth DeLoughrey claims that European colonialism has constructed the trope of the isolated island by overemphasizing the importance of the sea (2007, 2). Following this line of argument, it seems indeed like this trope has erased the history of a different reading of the Atlantic, not so much as oceanic space but as a sea of islands. To activate a different reading of the early modern Caribbean, we need to acknowledge that seventeenth century travelers' world views, in part, remained within a Renaissance world view. But they also looked ahead, toward imperialism to come, thus preparing for the dominant discourse of globalization where islands were (and still are) conceived of as isolated from centers of power. An anonymous traveler relating the voyage of Samuel Champlain in the early seventeenth century contends that the Americas could be divided into two islands (2014, 82). He was not the only one. In the Renaissance mind, the world was an island that in itself was thought of as being constituted of islands.

The Renaissance had a form for this: the *isolario*, the book of islands (Lestringant 2017, 9). Here each island was described and pictured as a microcosmos, as independent spatial entities that together made up the world and added to the marvelous diversity of the universe (Tolias 2017, 21). Islands had a joint purpose. They provided the curious mind with material and reflected the divine creation as global and multiple, but also, as argued by Tom Conley (1996, 169), where the cosmographies failed to offer a complete image of totality, islands aroused a need for productive fragmentation that allowed for celebrating difference. This new expression of divine celebration was, as demonstrated by Frank Lestringant's research (1993, 17), a way to simultaneously deal with both the formal and address the epistemic question of how to represent the globe at a time when the world expanded and new strategies for representation were needed to account for its diversity. With the *isolario* no coherent narrative was necessary; writers could accumulate everything and present them as fragments in a disorderly collage (Lestringant 2002, 153). The fragmented nature of representation echoes the polysemic character of islands, where "reality and fantasy are tested together" (Conley 1996, 179). Thrown onto the page without any apparent order, islands appear at once as paradoxically

infinite and finite: they multiply infinitely on the page yet are in themselves limited and thus give themselves to the illusion of measurability. Without alluding to Glissant, Lestringant goes as far as suggesting that the island and the archipelago constitute a "form of thinking" (2002, 31) and not simply a form to contain and reduce the world. In a sort of backwards way, the *isolario* posits the island as an object of knowledge but is clearly also influenced by the object it sets out to capture.

The genre of the *isolario* died out during the seventeenth century, and, while the travelogues share the expression of "island hopping" with this particular genre, they lack the imaginary and the pictorial dimensions. Nevertheless, whether it was due to the archipelagic geography of the region or to a philosophical and religious heritage, the travelogue to the Caribbean had not entirely abandoned the "book of islands" mindset. Du Tertre explains in the preface to his *Histoire générale des Antilles* that his intention was to write a *history* and not offer a chronicle of the region. The argument not to organize his history chronologically is, of course, legitimate in so far as it places him in the tradition of natural history writing in the illustrious lineage of Herodotus and Pliny. But his choice equally derives from geography: it would be too confusing to follow a linear structure. This is one of the reasons why he does not "scrupulously follow [...] the order in which the events happened" (1667 t1, 107).[14] The other is that a chronologic structure would have forced the narrative to "jump from one island to another" (1667 t1, 107).[15] He lets space determine the historical narrative. Contrary to the seemingly disorderly *isolario* of the Renaissance, Du Tertre wants to contain the fragments and give them coherence. The thematic structure of the natural history genre is constitutive on this point, but instead of stressing this classical heritage, he refers to his knowledge of the geographic space.

Thus, what we have is a combination of a representative mode that imposes an order onto space and another mode of relating to space that is determined by the experience of this space. It follows roughly de Certeau's distinction between a textualization of space that operates through movements on the ground, through spatialization and touring (1984, 97), and another representative modality that operates through the visual,

[14] Comme j'ay seulement entrepris d'écrire une histoire & non pas faire des annales, je ne m'attacheray pas aussi scrupuleusement à suivre l'ordre du temps auquel les choses sont arrivées.

[15] Afin de ne'estre pas obligé de sauter continuellement d'Isle en Isle.

localizing and mapping out space (118). De Certeau famously takes his example from twentieth-century Manhattan, juxtaposing the distant panorama of the city that one could get from the top of the World Trade Center and the walker's perspective of the bustling city. The distant view is that of order and power, whereas the walker creates the city from below, using tactics as he moves on the streets. One watches space; the other practices it. One is a visual mode of representation; the other is an embodied way of experiencing space. It is here that we can trace the making of spatiality: "Stories," de Certeau reminds us, "carry out a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places" (118). Travelogues also alternate writing modes: some passages give priority to the map whereas others prefer the tour. The question is what the transitions between them say about the construction of insular space.

Let me begin with the map. Topographic descriptions recall the *isolario*; they follow a similar pattern, starting with naming and situating each island on the map and in relation to other islands. This is clearly a discourse of control. The cartography is, in this context, not aimed at spurring the imagination; the aim is to delineate the islands with the intention to exhaust and control space. Size is always estimated. The localization of settlements often served as a point of departure for the rest of the description. Other useful localizations mapped out the island: where there was freshwater, good soil, and fine wood and if it provided hunting opportunities. We are informed about weather conditions and incommodities (mosquitos, hurricanes, lack of water, aggressive inhabitants, and so on), where it was best to anchor, and which sites could be developed. Even if they are governed by visual mapping, topographies contribute to what de Certeau calls practices of space. Several passages in the travelogues tell about everyday life exchanges and the necessity of drawing knowledge from other islands. Comparisons between plants observed on different islands, for instance, help to specify various plant types. When Exquemelin sets out to tell about his adventures, he begins by describing the region. How else, he asks, should the reader be able to follow the adventures of the buccaneers (2012, 104)? Following roughly the same order as the natural histories, he begins by localizing the area and discusses the competing names of the region, noting, for instance, that the buccaneers "corrupt" the name and say *Maracaye* instead of *Maracaïbo*. The islands are then described socially: he tells of fishing, cultivation, navigation, and the native inhabitants who speak Spanish but are now controlled by the Dutch.

All travelers in the seventeenth century were seeking other islands to explore, inhabit, and exploit. There is thus a direct link between exploration—even if it was on a small scale in the Caribbean at this time—and the text. This partly explains why the principle for topographic descriptions is practical; they are both representational and social. Spatial precisions of an island served to situate it in relation to other islands so that future travelers and colonizers would know how to navigate and what is around them. Whether the island had water or not is crucial information alongside descriptions of places to embark. So are descriptions of what one can do in various places on the island: here you can fish for oysters; this bay is good to disembark the ships, here water is shallow so you have to row, and so on. Except in buccaneer stories, the practical rationale is linked to the development of the colonial machine that will dominate the second half of the century. Here, too, geography impacts on the form: the representation of expansion and settlement in this region implies a narrative of island-searching. In this context, the archipelagic is not characterized by a counter-movement to exploration. Rather, settling or trading motivates linkages to other islands and continents; the archipelagic routes constitute the foundation of colonization.

Yet, while intended to capture singular traits of each island for the benefit of interested settlers and proprietors, the rhetorical construction of the descriptive discourse also has another effect: it gives the impression that we read about one island that is repeated in a series and, in that repetitive act, a multitude is created. On the page of the seemingly dry and iterative descriptions emerges a sense of repeating islands, as conceptualized by Antonio Benítez-Rojo (1997). As Richard Scholar argues, paying attention to the fragmented structure, borrowed at once from the *isolario*, natural history, and the geographical and social context, is a way to make the early modern reverberate in contemporary Caribbean thought, "not just by revealing its residual trace in the language of the archipelago, but also by setting out a more powerful challenge to the dominant discourse of globalization than globality is at present able to offer" (2015, 23). What the seventeenth-century travelogues add to insular representations is a structural coherence that links the islands together, enforcing the archipelagic over insularity. The catalogue structure provides that coherence, constituting the islands as one space, and the accounts of travels between the islands underscore the proximity between them and grant a geographical unity that is transposed onto the narratives. It further shows how, although each constituent of an archipelago can at first seem isolated, the

currents between and among islands reveal a wider horizon. The proximity between islands and to the sea is a reality that missionaries and inhabitants have to learn to operate.

Touring the Archipelago

To analyze the way spatial practices might operate I will now shift focus and take on an internal archipelagic perspective. Moving beyond the topographies, it becomes productive to borrow from DeLoughrey's theorization of how the archipelago can be constructed from below and not from a given position of power. Instead of starting from the "bird's eye view" of the explorer, she chooses a Brathwaitian "tidalectic" approach that enables the analysis of "a dynamic and shifting relationship between land and sea that allows island literatures to be engaged in their spatial and historical complexity" (2007, 2–3).[16] The approach resonates with de Certeau's notion of a spatializing practice, where description gives the reader a tour, following movements in space. The motives were exploitative, commercial, and evangelical, but travelers ended up navigating between the islands for reasons that they did not always control. And while producing knowledge about the insular space, a knowledge motivated by a drive for domination, the result was often instability. This, I argue, has to do with the fact that the early travel writings were deployed on unstable terrain, epistemologically, politically, and representationally: they investigate how a new space can be practiced. In this context, topographies alone do not suffice. The islands need to be spatialized and narrated from the point of view of users moving in space. Through this perspective, the narratives can turn them into a stage where the history of settlement unfolds.

In some passages, the islands turn into active players, determining the rapport with others and the conceptualization of colonization. We can notably detect such tendencies when the travelers relate the chaotic period that Philip Boucher has called the "era of proprietors" (2008, 88), which roughly coincides with the Regency in France (1643–1651). Let me briefly review the historical context: the Queen mother Anne of Austria

[16] Kamau Brathwaite famously defined tidalectics as a kind of Caribbean dialectics modelled after the constant turbulent movements of the ocean, proposing a chaotic yet unified notion of time and space: "instead of the notion of one-two-three, Hegelian, I am now more interested in the movement of the water backwards and forwards as a kind of cyclic, I suppose, motion, rather than linear" (Brathwaite cited in Mackey 1995, 14).

and Mazarin tried to retake control over the islands by sending their governor, Noël Patrocle de Thoisy, to replace the governor of Saint Christophe de Poincy, Knight of the Order of Malta, in 1645. Their attempt failed. Poincy refused to leave his position, and Thoisy had to return to France. According to Du Tertre, proprietors and governors used France's internal conflicts to seize more power and land, often to the detriment of the settlers, indentured laborers, and other commoners, who suffered under their despotic rule. During this time, the Antilles were like "very troubled waters," he writes, and it took long before the waves of emotions had calmed down and French islands were stabilized (1667 t1, 396).

Du Tertre includes a story within the story of the era of proprietors which illustrates how the archipelagic production of space unfolds between French politics and Caribbean geography. Upon returning to Paris, de Thoisy had informed the Queen Regent about Poincy's refusal to accept her commission. Rumors then spread back to the islands that the queen disapproved of Poincy's politics (1667, t1, 401). In Du Tertre's version, this put Poincy in a difficult situation: he wanted to expel those proprietors whom he suspected of having plotted against him from Saint-Christophe. The problem was that he could not send them back to France since they might report back to the Queen Regent and add to Poincy's bad reputation in the circles around the Crown. While waiting for the tensions between the Crown and the Order of Malta to ease, he decided to send his adversaries to the Virgin Islands under the pretext that they should look for new territories to explore for the Crown.

In 1647, sixty men embarked from Saint-Christophe on the order of Poincy. The voyage was difficult. Luckily, one of them, whom Du Tertre identifies as Jean Pinart, had traveled to the Virgin Islands before and knew about an English settlement where the group of banished Frenchmen could anchor. This is where their archipelagic adventure commenced. The island was mosquito-infested, making it difficult to rest. Hoping to find a better place to settle, a group of experienced men was sent out to explore the island. Upon their return to the others they found the place covered with dead bodies and all the equipment, including their boats, was gone. Since the island where they had landed was close to Saint Jean de Portric, inhabited by the Spanish, they immediately suspected them. For the next three to four months, the Frenchmen had nothing to live on, no tools, and no boat. They barely survived, eating crabs and things they could pick with their bare hands. Ultimately, they found a fallen *acoma* tree and started building a raft, using the woods, liana and leaves from the forest.

With sails made out of their own shirts, a selected few of the survivors set sail to find "another island inhabited by Christians" (1667 t1, 404). Du Tertre gives the reader a pathetic scene of departure: the shipwrecked men organized a final meal before the tearful farewell. Both those who stayed on the island and those who left were equally afraid of dying. Rowing "*à la façon des Sauvages*," the group first arrived at a small island, Virgino Goarda, where they ate and left their mark, like explorers. Repeating the European gesture of possession, they named the island and called it "Violette" with reference to a person unknown to them, buried with a cross where it was written "the one who rests here is called Violette, habitant of Saint Christophe" (1667 t1, 405).[17] Once the ceremony of naming concluded, they carried on to the island of Saint Thomas, where they found fresh water and fruits. From there, they continued to a nearby island, where they found wild animals to hunt. Still they pursued their search for fellow Christians and moved on to another small island on the coast of Puerto Rico. However, this was a bad decision: with unpredictable currents and rough waters, they had to row for three days before reaching the shore. Finding remains of a human settlement, they decided to stay and wait for people to arrive. Finally, one Sunday "as they were saying their prayers," they spotted a ship. Luckily, their "pitiful" story touched the captain, who gave the survivors clothes, food, and wine, promising to take them to Puerto Rico after fifteen days of fishing, which he did. On the route they noticed another raft carrying the rest of the group that they had left on the Virgin Islands. The entire colony was thus finally united, saved, and brought to San Juan, where they were allowed to stay, living off small jobs to gain enough money to return to Europe (1667 t1, 408).

Throughout the story, Du Tertre follows the crew from their point of view as they float on the Caribbean Sea; there is no center, only multidirectional movements. Yet the narrative is inhabited by a significant textual tension. Du Tertre's account reveals how the French were forced into an archipelagic way of experiencing space. They could not control the islands nor the seas between them. However, Du Tertre turns their destiny into a sentimental adventure, charging it with significance. It is simultaneously a critique of the regime of de Poincy and an argument for centralizing colonial control. It can be read as an attempt at integrating that uncertainty into a larger story of power over the islands. But the passage does more

[17] Celuy qui gist icy se nomme Violette, habitant de Saint-Christophe.

than that. Looking at the ways in which the passengers survive reveals their dependence on other types of knowledge. They have learned how to construct rafts from endemic trees from the Caribs. Du Tertre does not overtly make the connection, but indirectly through the Eurocentric terms used to describe how the men row standing *à la façon des Sauvages*, the Caribs appear as the prerequisite for their survival.

What an "archipelagic" reading like this allows us to do is, in Murphy's words, to emphasize "how individuals used maritime routes to forge connections across islands and therefore across multiple Indigenous and European domains" (2021, 5). The movements of peoples engaged in life on the islands forged this space as much as empires and nations. European wars and alliances also have determine the events, of course, but in the texts it becomes evident that they were not the major determinants of the Caribbean at this time. In most cases, conflicts between nations on the islands were behind the archipelagic way of experiencing the Caribbean at this time. The archipelagic emerges in these descriptions of war and conflict in verbs of orientation that actualize the geographic space through movement. An officer "arrives" with his men, calls on the Natives to come, tension arises, and the Natives retire to a nearby small island. In other cases, people "take refuge" on islands, they are ready to embark on canoes, the French set sail, and so on. Vision and hearing also come into play, as when somebody spots a stranger approaching or hears the Indigenous call to assemble their people. The history of one island cannot be isolated from another; it is an archipelagic history that unfolds in the routes between the islands. Several actors intervene, and actions occur through an engagement with other islands, without passing through official channels or through Europe or the Atlantic.

Similar signs of ambivalence appear in other archipelagic passages. This was the consequence when the Spanish destroyed the fortress in Saint Martin to make the island inhabitable for other nations, and chased the Dutch off the island. Hearing about the destruction, governor Poincy planned to take over Saint Martin and convinced a group of French settlers to try their luck and sail for Saint Martin and Saint Barthelemy (Du Tertre 1667 t1, 409). Du Tertre's negative attitude toward Poincy comes out clearly in this passage: people inhabit the islands for the wrong reasons, he claims. They sought to please Poincy, not to make a profit and in so doing improve the settlement. Consequently, they were not motivated enough to resist the hardships that come with such a project. The Natives quickly noticed this, according to Du Tertre, and attacked the French,

leading to "carnage" in 1656. For several years the French did not want to set foot on the island. Another example is the establishment on the islands of Saintes and Marie Galante in 1648, which is related in many of the travelogues. The French colony had just recently settled when Natives from Dominica attacked English settlers on the nearby island of Antigua. Charged with war booty, the Natives stopped on Marie Galante on their way back. Not knowing about the attack, the French welcomed the victorious men. But as the Natives returned to Dominica, they were assaulted by a group of Frenchmen from Martinique who knew about the attack on the English colony and sought revenge. This in turn provoked the Natives to return to Marie Galante and attack the same settlers who had just welcomed them. As they set fire to the French fortress, inhabitants of other islands were alerted. Other Natives from Dominica, friends of the French, were the first ones who came to the rescue and informed Houël, the governor of Guadeloupe, of the assault committed by their fellow islanders (Du Tertre 1667 t1, 419). The entire episode led Houël to declare war on the Natives and send men to Dominica, among which we find ten to twelve Caribs who "served as guides to our French & fought bravely against their compatriots, preferring usefulness (utilité) instead of alliances of friendship and blood" (1667 t1, 421).[18]

Looking at the narratives of settlement in terms of touring rather than mapping does not contradict what we already know: the establishment was brutal. But the archipelagic reading enables us to capture the *process.* Settlement was rarely definite; it was operational and dependent on geography. Du Tertre tells about how he was sent by the count of Cérillac to make an account of Grenada and had somebody else sent to make an initial estimation of the lands. This person reported back and gathered people before settlement began. They used carpenters from Martinique, other specialists from different islands, and enslaved peoples bought from Brazil and started negotiating with the Natives. All this unfolds in 1658, meaning that thirty years of French presence had gone by. This history also affects the turn of events. The Native captain explains that he is not ready to receive the French the way he had welcomed Monsieur du Parquet: "If he wanted to have their island and become its master, they had to give

[18] Servirent de guides à nos François, & se battirent vaillamment contre leurs compatriotes, preferant leur utilité à toutes les alliances de l'amitié et du sang.

something in return" (Du Tertre 1667 t1, 428).[19] After eight peaceful months of settlement, conflicts arose, and the French tried to chase the Caribs from Grenada, violating the contract of exchange. Angered, the victims of the attack allied with other Caribs on Saint Vincent and Dominica (429). War was now inevitable. The French massacred the Natives, and the few survivors committed collective suicide by throwing themselves into the sea from a rock now called the "Leapers' Hill" (*Morne de Sauteurs*) rather than falling into the hands of the French. The settlement on Saint Lucia, on the other hand, was accidental. Leaving Grenada to go to Paris for negotiations with the *Compagnie des Isles de l'Amérique*, Du Parquet accidentally noticed that Saint Lucia had been abandoned by the English. Instead of sailing to Paris, he tried his luck and settled on the island. Enjoying a good relationship with the Natives, Du Parquet stayed longer than two years, the usual timeframe before something went wrong (harvest turning bad, disease, Natives, other Europeans), and the settlement turned from profit to fiasco, prompting the settlers to leave and search for yet another place. Clearly, what all these examples show is that the establishment at this point was not yet a territorial colonial enterprise. Du Parquet extracted as much as he could from the lands and then left.

The oceanic space also played its part. Many times the search for new islands went wrong and forced the settlers into the archipelagic geography. At one point, Pelleprat recalls, the French settlers were "dispersed on the islands," and one had to make difficult journeys should they need assistance (1658, 14). In fact, staying on an island was in itself a challenge. The Carpentras manuscript reveals how wind took the schooners off course (2002, 97–98). Captain Fleury and his crew were desperately looking for a way to reach Peru, but as the ships were in bad shape, they were stuck on the islands, which inevitably led to famine. Stopping always meant exposing oneself to the risk of attack by Natives or other Europeans. Like sharks, travelers needed to move to survive, especially before 1626 when the official settlement was initiated. But unlike sharks, the French did not master the Caribbean Sea and ended up floating aleatorically between islands, on which they tried desperately to embark. Symptomatically, boats were sometimes given more agency than the travelers in the texts: "The canoe [...] took its route towards the island of Tobago to retake the wind from the islands; the boat made up to two *lieues* under the wind from Grenada,

[19] S'il voulait avoir leur Isle & s'en rendre maistre; il falloit qu'il leur donnât de la traitte en échange.

that one could easily have reached with the help of oars if one would have wanted to thanks to an unexpected calm, but having lost this occasion, the breeze rose and pushed the boat with the winds…" (La Vigne 2014, 270–271).[20] At other times, a desire for profit drove the French to take hazardous risks, like when a group of settlers left Tobago for the South American continent, where they hoped to find precious stones or metals (Rochefort 1658, 403–404). But they misjudged the scope of the voyage. After four days of sailing without seeing land, they ran out of provisions. Luckily, they were saved by Natives. Weak boats combined with a lack of knowledge of geography and nature occasionally turn the settlers into puppets floating on the Caribbean Sea.

All these stories show the uncertainty that was at the foundation of the insidious exploitation of peoples and lands. While the topographies and stories about successful settlement give the impression that the French knew the geography well, passages governed by the spatializing tour mode show that they were not always in control. Even if the texts are ruled by colonial intentions, it is possible to speak of such passages in terms of an "island migration" that functions as "a vital narrative trope" (DeLoughrey 2007, 24). Space is not flattened but lived and explored as touring: "Attention to movement offers a paradigm of rooted routes, of a mobile, flexible, and voyaging subject who is not physically or culturally circumscribed by the terrestrial boundaries of island space" (DeLoughrey 2007, 3). In these narratives of routes, the history of the settlement unfolds processually between the islands.

Moreover, the ground perspective calls attention to how the narratives produce differences between French and Caribs. For while the desire is to domesticate island space, travelogues indicate that there are other ways of practicing the archipelago, thus revealing effects of other types of experience and knowledge. The main difference is that settlers sought to map and control the region but were unintentionally drawn into the practice of routes, whereas the indigenous population produced space in relation to their movements in the archipelagic space. The anonymous writer of Carpentras attests that whereas being stranded on an island was

[20] Le canot […] prit sa route vers l'île de Tabaco pour regagner le vent des Îles; le bateau fut jusqu'à deux lieues sous le vent de la Grenade, qu'on aurait facilement gagnée à force de rames si on avait voulu, à cause d'un clame qui surprit; mais ayant perdu cette occasion, la brise, s'étant levée, poussa le bateau à vau-le-vent, de sorte que, n'ayant pu gagner l'île de Saint-Croix, il arriva aux Vaches proche de l'île de Saint-Domingue, où l'on prit de l'eau.

life-threatening for Europeans, the Natives kept gardens on each island so that they could stay for some time if weather or enemies prevented them from leaving (2002, 213). In his dictionary, Breton contrasts the French colonies' misery on the islands with the Caribs' way of living in an interesting entry. He enters the word for "famine" only to observe that the Caribs have no term for starvation because they have never suffered from it.

> *The Savages cannot starve because their habitations are not closed, so they can quickly perceive danger or if they suspect danger, they can retire to the mountains where they have gardens for this necessity; or if they are at sea, they find on the rocks or under the rocks* Belébuera, Ebépoulou, mäbália, Burgaux, *and other shells, fish tadpoles, crayfish, small snails that they call* couléme, *in the rivers, which make them survive. In the forest, they know the fruit trees and the roots that are large as thighs (they are Ignames) that they also eat in their camps.*[21] (1999, 114)

After this description of the Caribs' knowable nomadic social structure, in sync with the archipelago, Breton underscores that "the French are not as skillful when they first arrive to the islands" and then goes on to describe the famine that plagued the settlers of Guadeloupe in 1640.[22] The entry is an illustrative example of the complexity of Breton's dictionary, to which

[21] *Les Sauvages ne peuvent être affamés, parce que leurs habitations n'étant point fermées, sitôt qu'ils apercoivent le danger, ou qu'ils s'en méfient, ils se retirent dans les montagnes où ils ont des jardins pour cette nécessité; outre qu'ils sont au bord de la mer, ils trouvent sur les roches, ou sous les rochers des* Belébuera, Ebépoulou, mäbália*, des Burgaux, et autres coquillages, pêchent dans les rivières des têtards, des écrevissent, des petits escargots, qu'ils appellent* couléme*, qui les font subsister. Ils connaissent dans les bois des arbres fruitiers, et des racines qui sont grosses comme la cuisse (sont des Ignames) qu'ils mangent même dans leurs habitations.*

[22] Breton notes, "The French are not so skilful when they are new to the islands. In the beginning of the settlement of the colony of Guadeloupe, we had the Savages on our backs. They besieged us for some hours, after which, even though they lifted the siege, they nevertheless kept prowling the woods and the coasts in their canoes where they killed those who might find themselves there; the shortage of bread and fresh water made the other ones dry out in their house and residences, in such way that they were more yellow than quince, dryer than Brazil wood, having but skin and bone, they fell into agony while taking tobacco, when talking and walking, without any other malady than the pure need and loss of energy. (*Les Français ne sont pas si adroits quand ils sont nouveaux dans les Îles. Au commencement de l'établissement de la Colonie de la Gardeloupe, nous avions les Sauvages sur les bras, qui nous assiégeaient quelques heures de temps, au bout desquelles, quoui qu'ils levassent le siège, ils ne laissaient pas néanmoins de rôder dans les bois, et le long des côtes dans leurs Canots où ils tuaient tous ceux qu'ils pouvaient trouver; la disette de pain et d'eau faisait sécher les autres dedans leurs habitations et demeures, en telle sorte qu'ils étaient plus jaunes que des coigns, plus secs que bois de Brésil, n'ayant que la peau et les os; en prenant du tabac, en parlant, et marchant ils tombaient en agonie, sans autre maladie que la pure nécéssité et défaillance.*)

I will come back in detail in Chap. 4. Here we can notice that the entry does several things at once. It points to a linguistic discrepancy between Carib and French—the latter having no word for famine—which he then links to social contexts. On this note the reader gets an anthropologic description of the Caribs' archipelagic way of life. Indirectly, Breton presents this description as a model for how to construct social life with the islands. The text then transforms into a historical discourse, telling about a situation of crisis for the French colony. The short narrative is filled with strong pathetic scenes expressed in an exaggerated style, including direct discourse and ending with a religious sentence praising those who die serving God. Such stylistic features stand out in regard to other entries in the dictionary and also from the anthropologic discourse that preceded the description of the famine. European social structure and the sedentary and exploitative ways of inhabiting land are not sustainable in this context, the entry underscores with emphasis. The colony needs to be integrated into an archipelagic way of life, but it also needs a solid structure. Again control and unsettlement dictate the mediation of the archipelago as a transitional social space between cultures.

Almost all of the travelers comment that the Native Caribbeans inhabited the archipelago differently than the Europeans, and this was to their advantage. They did not single out islands but consider the entire region to be their home (*demeure*), the anonymous writer of Carpentras writes (2002, 115). Several accounts testify that during the 1630s different Native peoples collaborated with each other against French settlers. They allegedly attacked colonies in the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, Grenada, and Martinique. Navigating in "pirogues" or canoes, the Natives used the archipelago to surprise the French. It is impossible, Pelleprat states, to estimate how many Caribs would show up in the case of a confrontation because the numbers were impossible to discern from afar (1658, 90). Unlike the French, the Caribs were familiar with the geography, knew how to hide in creeks with their canoes, and conducted a guerilla-like warfare. Inexperienced, the French were unable to calculate where the enemy might appear, which seems to have haunted the settlers, on occasion provoking a phantasmagoric conception of space, like when the French in Guadeloupe had suffered a long famine by the end of the 1630s. Ravaged by hunger and malady, they began to hallucinate, Du

Tertre writes in a vivid style: "The red leaves in the woods looked liked Savages to them, and made them sound the alarm across the entire island; a piece of wood drifting on the ocean was taken for a canoe filled with enemies; so they had no rest, & didn't know where they were safe" (1654, 47).[23] Fear, hunger, and sickness change the perception of island space. Rochefort also describes how the Natives would hide in vegetation, on mountains, and in the water (1658, 458). Yet most of the time, death was more of a threat at moments when the Natives kept their distance. Du Tertre repeatedly points out that war with the Natives led to famine because trade would stop, and the French would no longer get the Indigenous assistance necessary for cultivating the lands. Likewise, the anonymous writer of Carpentras tells that the most miserable Europeans were those who found themselves stranded on an island that was not inhabited by Natives (2002, 106).

To some extent the native Caribbeans were thus in control of the archipelagic space because of their aquatic and archipelagic knowledge. They could swim and navigate much easier between islands in their small canoes and pirogues. One voyager tells about a Carib man who, despite the fact that he had been shot, managed to flee. The French chased him down but could not kill him, "because he kept on swimming between waves […] he finally reached the open sea, & saved himself on a neighbouring island" (Du Tertre 1667 t1, 422).[24] The anonymous writer of Carpentras advances the hypothesis that the reason why Caribs preferred to travel by water was the volcanic geography of the Antilles. It was simply easier to go to the other side of an island by canoe. The settlers gathered some of this archipelagic knowledge from Natives: from them they learned how to make canoes or rafts, as seen in the example discussed earlier. He further explains that the Caribs could decipher the ocean and the winds; they knew how to navigate according to the stars and the sun and could localize lands well beyond the archipelago. They decided on where to camp depending on weather predictions, and they navigated,

> following the moon and the stars, of which they have an extended knowledge about their orbit as well as their names, and, which is incredible, they

[23] Les feüilles rouges du bois, leur sembloient estre des Sauvages, & leur faisoient donner l'allarme à toute l'isle; un arbre flottant sur la mer, estoit pris par eux pour une Pirogue chargée de leurs ennemis; de sorte qu'ils n'avoient aucun repos, & ne sçavoient en quel lieu ils estoient en asseurance.

[24] Parce qu'il nâgea toûjours entre-deux eaux, […] qu'enfin il gagna le haut de la mer & se sauva dans une Isle voisine.

> can name differently a large quantity [of stars], which they showed us, and they also know where lands and kingdoms such as Brazil, Peru, France, and others are situated, and judge all situations following the sun's course and this way they never go astray. A blind man, father of the captain of the village where I stayed, showed me all the places of these lands after I had told him in which direction the sun rises and sets.[25] (2002, 223)

Conceptually, the missionaries were attentive to Indigenous practices of space. Rochefort particularly underscores that the Natives thought of language in spatial terms. They interpreted writing, for instance, as language crossing the oceans, he notes. Since they themselves could not write, they needed to travel much more; oral culture could explain their nomadic lifestyle (Rochefort 1658, 362). This, in turn, made them great diplomats. They deliberated and negotiated orally, facing their adversary. Their "sagacity" drove them to see others, Le Breton, the last French missionary who lived with the people of Saint Vincent, suggests, adding that this is why he calls, "these indigenous people itinerary rather than sedentary" (1984, 42).[26] They even arrange social life in relation to the islands and their proximity. Le Breton writes,

> In fact, the island, open on all sides, with many bays and creeks, gives easily to each family father a propitious occasion to choose to settle down, in a space where, far from the burden of serving others, in safety, a unique access road is open all the way up to his residence, and only by sea, he can live with his woman, his children, his close ones, in a way that most suits his desires.[27] (42)

[25] Ils se guident selon le soleil et les étoiles, desquelles ils ont une grande connaissance tant de leurs noms que de leurs cours, et nomment diversement une grande quantité qu'ils nous montraient, chose qui est presque incroyable, et savent aussi dire les situations des terres et royaumes, comme du Brésil, du Pérou, France et ainsi des autres, et jugent toutes les situations selon le cours du soleil et par ainsi ne se fourvoyent jamais. Un aveugle, père du capitaine du village où j'étais, me montrait tous les endroits des susdites terres après que je lui ai dit où était le soleil levant et couchant.

[26] C'est pourquoi j'appelle ces indigènes itinérants plutôt que sédentaires.

[27] De fait, l'île, ouverte de tous côtés, pleine de baies et de criques, fournit aisément à chaque père de famille une occasion propice pour choisir de s'y établir, en un lieu où, loin du joug de tout asservissement à autrui, en sécurité, une voie d'accès unique étant ouverte jusqu'à sa demeure, et seulement par mer, il pût vivre avec sa femme, ses enfants, ses proches, de la façon la plus conforme de ses désirs.

The archipelago is here presented as a contributing factor to the liberty of the Indigenous people. Thanks to their ability to master the surrounding sea, they could settle on any island, thereby avoiding ever becoming any authority's subject. Another traveler, Le Breton, suggests that they were not traveling between the islands and inhabiting different islands due to physical necessity or by force of nature. Instead, boredom was as strong of a reason to move from one island to another: "sometimes experiencing a sort of lassitude in the native land, they undertake journeys to the other islands that are not far away" (Le Breton 1982, 57).[28] Traveling gave material for new conversations and could, according to Le Breton, last several months. The archipelago turned the Natives into local cosmopolitans.

In other words, these early modern travelers noted what contemporary historians of the Indigenous population of the Antilles have affirmed: the Indigenous way of inhabiting the archipelago nomadically questions stable notions of natural frontiers between spaces as well as cultures (Bérard 2013, 160). Rochefort describes how the Natives always paid attention to the surrounding sea. Commercial and other types of social exchanges often occured on water, between islands.[29] Contrary to the French settlers, who stayed secluded on their island in fear since they did not know how to read the archipelagic space, the Natives actively sought those who were approaching their island. They identified visitors by voice since they did not trust the signs given by Europeans (Rochefort 1658, 457). The anonymous buccaneer details how the Caribs saved him from being drowned, as he was too exhausted to drag himself from the beach. They took his bag and his sword and helped him up, let him rest, and gave him food. Inspired by the Natives, some French men even used the geographic space to escape their servile condition as indentured labor. They fled one island and settled with the Natives on another (anonymous writer of Carpentras 2002, 223).

Enslaved people only occasionally were given the chance to use the archipelago for such liberational purposes. The most significant example is the shipwreck of a Dutch slaveship on the coast of Saint Vincent. The episode is often alluded to in the travelogues, but only Le Breton describes

[28] Éprouvant parfois comme une lassitude du sol natal, ils entreprennent de faire des voyages dans les autres îles qui ne sont pas éloignées.

[29] Trading on ships is a French practice, no doubt a result of the fact that the French for a long time did not possess territories. According to some historians this practice might have facilitated the relationships between the French and the natives. They might have felt less threatened on the sea than on land.

it more extensively. In the passage, we learn that the Caribs of Saint Vincent received the shipwrecked diasporic Africans in the same way as they welcomed other Caribs (1982, 38). He further notes that some "Ethiopians know very well how to swim".[30] The African survivors settled on the island and lived side-by-side with the Natives. According to Le Breton, they integrated entirely with Indigenous society, "used the same rules" and behaved "almost like masters, remembering and abhorring their ancient servitude" (38–39).[31] There are few traces of these exchanges between Caribs and free and enslaved black persons in travel writing, but the brief allusion by Le Breton to this society formed by stranded diasporic Africans, who by the forces of nature and geography gained liberty, and the Indigenous, who had been circumscribed by the forces of history to inhabit Saint Vincent, hint at other processes of creolization occurring on the margins of colonial island space. The increased brutality of the plantation system along with the systematic exclusion of Indigenous peoples forced these individuals to live the islands as a space of competition for survival, leading to allegiances between these groups (Indigenous supporting maroons; enslaved peoples turning against the French in alliance with Caribs or vice versa: they would align with the French to secure peace or personal profit). These alliances are sprinkled out in the historical narratives in passing as we have seen. They do not constitute the core of history from the perspectives of the travelers, but they mark travel writing, fragmenting the narratives and manifesting other conflicts. Along with Murphy (2021, 50), we can thus claim that indigenous people and diasporic Africans also intervened in the spatial struggle of early colonization while constantly under the threat of being expelled, enslaved, or killed.

* * *

The early colonial Caribbean travel narratives contain several modes of production of the archipelagic space. There are involuntary movements between islands, triggered by external circumstances (storms, wars, hunger, and so on). There are also movements provoked by commercial and evangelical interests. Finally, there are echoes of a local archipelagic way of life, more integrated and adapted to the geography, that the travelers

[30] Quelques Ethiopiens sachant très bien nager.

[31] Et même ils font presque les maîtres, en hommes qui, se souvenant de leur servitude ancienne et l'ayant en horreur.

observe and from which they sometimes try to learn. All these aspects are interrelated in the narratives, confirming that "island movements are generative and interconnective spaces of metamorphosis, of material practices, culture and politics" (Pugh 2013, 10). We have seen how travelers adapted to the geographies but also how the islands and the everyday life of the Natives radically changed under the pressure of these movements.

Thus, the narratives of settlement show that archipelagic space may foster interrelational epistemologies and poetics, though not automatically and, more importantly, such "archipelagraphy," to use DeLoughrey's term, is not univocal. Rather, travel writing like the French texts on the Caribbean from this period stem from what Glissant calls an "arrow-like errantry," focused on an object of desire, but geography and nature come into play and disturb that movement toward the desired object (1997, 12–15). This is an important reminder not to essentialize or project morals onto either errancy or geography. Nomadic movement or archipelagic thinking are not good per se, nor does the archipelago necessarily foster archipelagic writing. These are products of various cultural, natural, and geographical influences. This is also how these texts allow us to de-center our contemporary moment. They teach us that we should not essentialize archipelagic space as something that would necessarily lead to creative metamorphosis. More importantly, the archipelagic reading has allowed us to examine how others' knowledge and others' practices have entered productively into travel writing, leaving marks of other presences and experiences, which disrupt the narratives of conquest. Their movements align with the archipelagic nomadism or "errantry", to use Glissant's terms, at the same time as they are invasive; displaying what we might call an "arrow-like errantry" (Glissant 1997, 11–15). Indirectly the travelogues attest to what Murphy (2021) describes as Caribs living the archipelago as an interconnected space, which allows us to estimate the brutal impact the 1660 treaty between the English, French, and Caribs must have had on Indigenous life. From that point they were circumscribed to Saint Vincent and Dominica. Even if, as Murphy argues, Indigenous people kept playing an active role in the history of the Caribbean, their impact was radically diminished.

As the French settlement was stabilized and the wheels of colonial machinery started to turn more steadily around 1670, the representation of archipelagic space gradually changed. When Labat arrived in the Antilles in 1695, he mostly traveled on horseback by land and visited all of Martinique. In the middle of his sojourn, in 1703, he did voyage throughout the region as far as the larger Antilles to visit a new French possession:

Saint Domingue (Haiti). As we learn in Volume Six of his recollection, the voyage was planned and proceeded accordingly. The exception was an adventure that occurred at sea: he and his crew were put adrift and temporarily lived like buccaneers confined to their ship. They were captured and liberated, and there was a rumor of a treasure on the island of Negade (Labat 1722 t6, 338). Labat himself smuggled and "saved" enslaved people (who presumably were Catholics) from their cruel protestant owners. The adventure is dramatic and interesting in many regards, but it is not marked by the archipelago where it took place. Rather the entire narrative is conceived within a pirate imaginary that seems to belong to romance. There is never any impression of real danger or uncertainty.

In this context, the *isolario* as a form of thinking and writing is not relevant to the same extent, nor is there any sense of submission to landscapes and seascapes, and no dream of moving on to the next island with the intention to settle is present. Surely, conflicts over who colonized which island were not over and free Blacks and enslaved peoples migrated between the islands, especially in the Lesser Antilles (Thomasson 2022, 154), but the islands were presented in French travel narratives as national territories rather than open spaces. Labat operates in a period when the archipelago has almost been taken over by continental blocks of power. He described most of the islands from his ship as he passed them, together with information collected from other voyagers. He stayed for a longer period on some islands, like Jamaica, where he, for example, learned about the British's supposedly crueler way of treating the enslaved population. But he describes island societies, the European nation that possesses the island in question functions as determinant in that society whereas the interconnective forces are moved to the background. Most notably, at this point Caribs no longer had the possibility to practice archipelagic life, as they were limited to the islands of Dominica and Saint Vincent. In a way, Labat, too, was sensitive to the Native Caribbean way of living the islands, but his observations are based on other voyagers rather than on personal experience. Speaking about a small cul de sac, he refers to Rochefort and notes that the lands must have been inhabited or at least cultivated "either by the ancient Indians or by the Caribs who succeeded them, because one can find very few big trees on this island even if the earth is good, deep, and fresh" (1722 t6, 300).[32] Natives had been decimated by ruthless massacres, and those who survived no longer appeared in creeks unknown to the Europeans or navigated between the islands. Instead, they too had

[32] Ou par les anciens Indiens ou par les Caraïbes qui leur ont succedé; car on n'y trouve que très-peu de gros arbres, quoique la terre y soit bonne profonde & fraiche.

become sedentary. As a matter of fact, Labat did not encounter any Natives until after two years of living in Martinique, when he made a trip to Dominica with the explicit intention to "see Savages," as if he was visiting a live zoo or doing site tourism. He stayed in Dominica for a few days, learning about their cultures and costumes while shopping for souvenirs.

The texts from the 1650s and 1660s hint at what is to come: the shift from spatial production determined by the archipelago toward the one that will dominate the French Caribbean from the end of the seventeeth century forward. One clearly notices that there is now a coherent colonial Caribbean culture based on slavery, plantation, and triangular trade. Island after island, colonization gradually takes on a continental form, determined by the colonial power that possessed them. It did not happen overnight, but successively from the 1670s the modes of production and the organization of space changed. Triggered by sugar agriculture and industry, with better techniques for refinement, the importation of enslaved people from Africa increased, and these men and women became the prime instrument of production. At the same time, an ideological space of discourse produced a political and social space where this could evolve: the *Exclusif*—prohibiting all French from trading with anyone other than French—the *Code noir*—the legal document regulating the slave trade and slavery—and absolute monarchy. Taken together, these elements led to a double closure of the islands: the plantation in itself was, in Glissant's terms, a "closed space" (1997, 63), an isolated island within the island, and exchanges with the outside world were now oriented toward and determined by the French Atlantic triangle, aiming toward creating a closed system of circulation between France, Africa, and the Antilles. If Colbert initiated the colonial "exclusif" to centralize colonial power by integrating the islands in the French economic system, Labat engages in a literary worldmaking of the islands as a *French* Caribbean space. The archipelagic undercurrents of the texts from the establishment disappear as the islands merge into plantation societies and travelogues into "plantation books." The shift shows how the signification of the archipelago can change (Stephens and Martínez-San Miguel 2020, 1). In the moments of early colonization the islands were layered like palimpsest, intertwining past and present as a simultaneous trembling. No melancholia loomed over the ways in which the travelers were drawn into the archipelagic space; instead the tensions between control and unsettlement made them explore contradictory temporalities, pointing backwards yet striving forward to an even more violent future.

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