Religious experience is often viewed as the cementing factor of communities, the ideological medium which enables a community to conceive of its own affiliation and unity. Studies on diaspora, particularly French ones, present religion as a factor that distinguishes certain diaspora from others (Bruneau, 1994; 1995). Religion is viewed as a primary resource capable of ensuring a social continuity that surpasses the phenomenon of dispersion. Concerning the Armenian community in the Parisian conurbation, Hovanessian (1992, page 200) claims that “reference to a religious tradition gives the group its own intrinsic unity and spatial roots”. Médam (1993) sees the “Book” as helping the Jewish people to “feel as one”, “holding together a scattered people”, “serving as a ground for identity or a shared space when creating physical roots was impossible” (page 64). Here we can discern the influence of the traditional diaspora model. Clifford (1994, page 306), qualifies this as a “centered diaspora model”, an example of which can be found in the work of Safran (1991). As is perfectly illustrated in the now classic texts of Hall (1994a; 1994b) and Gilroy (1993), this model has been much criticised over the past ten years, allowing Cohen (1995) to speak of “iconoclastic conceptions of the diasporic experience”.

In this article I take a similar stance and have the added objective of showing religion as an essential feature of the diasporic experience of Caribbeans in the United Kingdom, one which contributes to the development of a particular vision of social conditions. This view is not in line with previous ideas of unity but is, in contrast, free from the rigidity of community boundaries. When I speak of the notion of hybridity, I do not mean to say that diasporic identity is necessarily hybrid: it is much more a question of identifying one system *among others* in the production of identity which is at work in the Caribbean religious experience. I would describe this identity as ‘open’. This description highlights its foremost characteristic of being based on the principle of permeability, rather than on that of the rigidity of boundaries. My approach underlines
why the notion of space cannot be dissociated from the process of social construction. 
For this reason I propose two main ideas. First, I maintain that through religious 
discourse, as well as through church activities and organisation, religion forms an 
available space which lends itself to the creation of a social representation in response 
the physical segregation and racialism of British cities. Furthermore, being situated beyond the prescribed categories, it also allows access to 
another, different and liberating, social configuration. The conceptual definition of this 
which is more mental than material, is akin to the theoretical proposals of 
Lefebvre (1974), and is also based on concepts related to geographies of ‘resistance’ 
(Pile and Keith, 1997). In my second notion, the central importance of the spatial 
referent in this new social representation is essential. In other words, it would seem 
to me that this social conception is meaningful only in relation to the network of 
spatial significations on which it rests. Because of these significations, the definition 
of the social link is dependent both on a certain topology and on a specific way of 
bringing into play what is known as ‘boundary making’. I will show that in the case 
of the Caribbean diaspora, this means that boundaries should never be considered to 
be fixed, nor should they be reified.

This paper is in four main parts. In the first section I present the approach on 
which this research is based, focusing both on the theoretical tools brought into play 
and on the methods used to collect and analyse the empirical data. In the second part I 
give a contextualised description of the characteristics of Caribbean religion in the 
United Kingdom. This description will contribute to a better understanding of the 
characteristics of the system underlying the construction of identity. In the third part 
I present the arguments which allow us to understand the concept of an ‘open identity’. 
In the fourth part I propose a theoretical interpretation of this identity in light of the 
analysis of the interaction between spaces of power and spaces of resistance and, 
finally, how this affects the notion of diaspora.

Space theorised and space experienced: from theory to practice

Space as the key

The point of view put forward here is based on the acknowledgement of the inextric-
cable link between social and spatial issues. As Massey (1993) so rightly affirms, it is 
no longer a question of just taking into account that “the spatial is socially constitu-
ted”, but of recognising the other, “perhaps even more powerful”, side of this state-
ment—namely that “the social is necessarily spatially constituted too” (page 155). It is 
impossible to make recourse to such a theoretical proposition without endeavouring to 
understand the origin of such a relation; that is, the reason why social and spatial 
concerns are so intrinsically linked. In listing the reasons which make space and 
sociality so inseparable, in order to identify the smallest effective element between 
them without which this relationship could not exist, I would point without hesitation 
to ‘boundary making’; this is, what Paul-Lévy and Ségaud, whose book laid the 
foundations of ‘space anthropology’ (see Depaule, 1995) in France, called “the effectu-
ation of qualifying limits”. As Gupta and Ferguson (1992) point out, the real relevance 
of the issue of localisation, so vital to poststructuralist approaches to identity, is not so 
much in the designation of the actual place of identity or, as Bondi put it, (1993, 
page 183) “the emphasis on where”: rather, it is a question of identifying the constitu-
tive limit or boundary of this place, as well as how, by whom, and for whom, it affects 
the social aspect. These comments may seem surprising at a time when the issue of 
identities is increasingly assimilated to the existence of a ‘third space’, in particular 
because of the influence of the work of Bhabha (1994) and Soja (1996). This third space
is one where, bound by the principle of hybridity never to distinguish between same and Other, it is precisely the contour of the boundary which becomes blurred. It is “a space of tension, neither one nor the other, an interstitial space of discontinuity and disjuncture” (Rose, 1995, page 369). The representation of this space, the very concept of it, is, however, simply the outcome of the symbolic practice of tracing the outline of the ‘thing’. To speak of a third space, of hybridity, is in itself to use the very idea of boundary if only to say that no such boundary exists.

Any relation to Other or to the world implies a representation which is necessarily linked to the act of differentiation—distinguishing that of which the mind had no prior concept. The use of boundaries is therefore an integral part of symbolic practice (Paul-Lévy and Ségaud, 1983). In relation to recent geographical debates, I make three points. First, it should be noted that such a principle is not incompatible with the recognition of a possible multiplicity of produced representations or a diversity of understandings of the world. What we identify here is a ‘mechanism of meaning’, which does not preempt in any way what this mechanism is to be used for. Foucault’s proposition (1969) concerning language can be applied to any system of symbolic production: namely, “a system for any possible enunciation”, “a finite set of rules that allows for any number of performances” (page 39).(1) My second point relates to recent reflections derived from Latour’s sociology, in which hybridity is seen everywhere, in the form of the interrelation between the human and nonhuman. I do not see this new theoretical perspective as an encouragement to refute the idea of symbolic—therefore human—practice as a prime factor. On the contrary, I would be more inclined to read in Latour’s work (1994, 1996) an invitation to rediscover the imaginary, symbolic and human, where rational science refused to see anything but a clear division between the natural and social worlds, between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’. When Latour (1996, page 162) speaks of a “new paradigm” which restores “the rich matrix that gives meaning [to science]”, it is difficult to see symbolic practice either as primordial, or as necessarily at work in a representation of the world which cannot then be seen as excluding the human element. My third point is that, though the use of boundary is seen to be at work as soon as there is production of representations, this interpretation does not necessarily imply a binary conception of the world. As Dufour (1989) did, it is possible to conceive of other schemata of interpretation (unitarian, trinitarian). The work of Dufour is, however, strongly influenced by that of Deleuze and Dufour is, to my knowledge, the only author to address the fundamental issue. Furthermore, he does finally conclude that it is difficult to define a form of thinking that does not resort in any way to the binary mode, even if this form of thinking can only be defined in terms of its difference from another. This is the conclusion reached by Reichert in her essay “On boundaries”: “I recognize myself... . I develop my critique in ‘room’ determined by the form of that which I criticize” (1992, page 93). But rather than trying to think of symbolic expressions which are totally free from the idea of boundaries, which seems to me to be virtually impossible, would it not be more relevant to examine the ways in which this use may or may not be seen as producing symbolic violence? That is to say, how far can it be seen, or not be seen, as a means of exercising power over others? We must now reexamine the concept of space in order to understand how space, though at the root of all social construction, be it material or ideological, can also be at the base of symbolic violence.

(1) It is important to point out that in this definition there is no consideration of the ‘order of the discourse’. It must be remembered that, in Foucault’s view, this definition applies to language but not to discourse which consists, in fact, of a set of control procedures, selections, and exclusions that operate within the language and which thereby determines the possible content of any enunciation, according to time period and place (see Foucault, 1971).
Producing representations is thus a question of the use of boundaries. There are two possible ways to proceed: either through the use of language or, alternatively, through the use of physical resources. In the first case, as we know from Foucault’s work (1971), insofar as discourse determines the use of language, it also structures the world through “principles of classification, order, distribution” (page 23). On the other hand, several registers of discourse may be at work. This approach is seen in the work of De Certeau (1990) and of Thrift (1997, pages 135–136) when they highlight the plurality of the discursive practices which come into play in what the geographer calls, “variation in regimes of subjectification”, so moving away from the idea of “unified subjects of some coherent regime of domination”. The second possibility, that of physical space and materiality is, I believe, less well known. Drawing on the pioneering work of Lévi-Strauss (1955; 1973), Barthes (1985, pages 261–265) says that space is a genuine language in the nonmetaphorical sense of the term as, because of human intervention, it is completely codified in the form of discontinuous units comparable to phonemes and semes. The symbolic implications of this codification are considerable. They include a dimension in which space is no longer simply an object which needs to be understood, but is the tool or scheme of thought, the very basis for the development of forms of understanding of the world. This is why Bourdieu (1993) states that “the large social oppositions made visible in physical space, tend to be reproduced by the mind and language in the form of the fundamental oppositions of the principle of vision and division. That is to say as categories of perception and appreciation, or as mental structures. ... [Hence], space is surely one of the places in which power is asserted and exercised, no doubt in a most subtle fashion, that of symbolic violence or non-perceived violence” (pages 162–163). The impact of codification through space is all the stronger because it acts as the structuring element of our mental processes and provides the scheme for our various categories. The identification of such a process permits us to speak of “the social prescriptive force of spatial systems” (Bordreuil and Ostrowetsky, 1979, page 5). As for language and discourse, this approach remains compatible with a conception in which the possibility of an individual or collective building of self, through the use of interstices, manoeuvres, and other means—including imaginary resources—resulting finally in a construction which is no longer that dictated by the prescriptive forces of spatial systems alone, is taken into account.

This last comment brings us to the heart of the question of the articulation between power and resistance. I will come back to this question in the last part of this paper, drawing on the work of Lefebvre (1974) and of De Certeau (1990). The work of these two authors allows us to analyse the Caribbean religious communities by applying a necessary double reading which consists of exploring those elements which contribute to a certain idea of freedom for the subject, without neglecting those which permit us to define the places where a constraining power is exerted.

Theories in situ
The research behind this work was carried out from 1994 to 1995 and is centred on a group of people of Caribbean origin living in Southampton in southeast England. The Caribbean population of Southampton is numerically small, comprising less than 1000 members (according to the 1991 Census). However, the relative insularity of this population is compensated for by the existence of active networks, notably in the area of religion, which link the Caribbeans of Southampton to their relatives and friends in other cities, especially London. In the United Kingdom, the majority of people of Caribbean origin are from Jamaica. This study is based exclusively on first-generation Jamaican immigrants, and on their children, with whom I came into contact.
In spite of their relative isolation, the Southampton Caribbeans experience the same conditions as those which are characteristic of settlers in larger cities, such as London, Birmingham, or Bristol. Several indicators, such as those relating to the concentration of the population in certain areas or to employment (2), point to “residential differentiation” as “an expression of entrenched racial inequalities” (Smith, 1989, page 17), as seen in the central area of Newtown in Southampton. According to official statistics from Southampton City Council (1993; 1994), this area is evaluated as being “marked by poverty”, a “dense urban landscape” with “planning blight”, “prostitution and apparent low community esteem”. Here we see the town planner’s mental representation of the area, one not unrelated to the “no-go area” referred to by Keith (1993), with its “highly normative” connotations “full of fearful images”, “combined with a reassuring vision of society” and “able simultaneously to evoke the one and imply the other” (page 220). In this view, Newtown is an area of prostitution, an area of drug trafficking, and an area to be avoided at night. We will see how the Caribbean religious experience not only counteracts this representation but also produces another set of images to be drawn upon.

I came into contact with people of Jamaican origin via a small Pentecostal congregation affiliated to the New Testament Church of God. This church is not situated in Newtown but the majority of the sixty or so members (fortynine of whom were officially baptised in 1994), either live, have lived, or have at least one relative still living in Newtown. This church was founded in 1964; its first Minister was of Jamaican origin, as is the present one. The religious services took place in private homes in Newtown until 1971 when the church purchased the present building which had previously belonged to a Methodist congregation. I visited the church regularly, attended the Sunday service for several months, and attended conventions and other social activities of the church which took place in other areas such as Brixton (London). I also conducted twenty conversation-style interviews of varied length (from two to twenty hours), mostly among practising members some of whom lived in Newtown. The results of this anthropological approach concerning such a small group can lead to the use of certain forms of generalisations—as can be seen in my use of the term ‘Caribbean diaspora’—only because they concur with the generalisations of other studies, particularly the remarkable work of Gerloff (1992) and Toulis (1997). The work of these authors reinforces the first results of this research (Chivallon, 1995b) in confirming that the community of Southampton is neither an isolated nor a marginal case.

The analysis of the interviews consisted mainly of noting the discourse of my interlocutors, any enunciation relative to the representation of social and community networks or to the places to which these were linked. I also noted what Mondada (1987) calls “topological markers”; that is, terms that express “relations to specific places”; the search for these is justified in that, on one hand, “the discourse expresses the place and conjures the image” and on the other, because “the lexis lends itself to a play on connotations, making it possible to speak of reality in spatial terms, notably in tropes” (page 173). This notion closely matches my own theoretical framework in which space is conceived of both as created by thought and as the schema for thought (Chivallon, 1995a; 1997b).

(2) Nearly 40% of the Caribbean population is concentrated in the two wards that make up Newtown; the white population represents 46% of the total population of this area (94% for the rest of the town). The people of Indian origin form the second-largest group. The overall rate of unemployment is more than 40% in Newtown, but the high number of students living in the area must be taken into account (25%, as against 5% in the rest of the town). Concerning the working population within the ethnic minorities, the rate of unemployment is 25%, as opposed to 11% for the rest of the active population of Southampton (Southampton City Council, 1993; 1994).
An approach to the Caribbean religious movements in the United Kingdom

The complexity of the religious landscape and the British context

To understand better how what we may call an ‘open identity’ is made up, it is necessary first to understand the specific nature of Caribbean religion in the United Kingdom. The idea of a ‘movement’ used by Gerloff (1992), reflects the dynamism of this sector, which is composed of a mosaic of different religious affiliations which is distinctly counter to the concept of a religion embodied by one dominant social institution.

The emergence of the so-called ‘black churches’ in the United Kingdom is linked to the history of migration.(3) According to Howard (1987, page 11), the expression “black churches” refers to “local churches which have black leadership and where membership is predominantly black”. But, as we shall see, the term does not correspond to how members of these churches in fact see themselves. The principle churches were founded in the 1950s and 1960s, at the time when migration from the Caribbean reached its peak.(4) These churches stem from North American Pentecostalism. There were already branches in the West Indies, where this more recent form of Pentecostalism was introduced at the beginning of the century. The major growth took place, however, towards the end of the 1950s (Howard, 1987, page 7). This is exemplified by the many conversions that took place at this time in the church in Jamaica. As well as the different Pentecostal affiliations in the United Kingdom, there are other religious families, principally the Sabbatarian and Holiness groups, who also originate from the United States. The two main present British denominations of the Sabbatarian churches (the Seventh Day Adventists, and the Seventh Day Baptists) were already in existence at the time of the arrival of Caribbean immigrants (Théobald, 1981). Within this picture of diversity there are also more specifically Caribbean groups, notably the Rastafarian(5) movement, and the revivalist church.(6) To appreciate the plurality of the religious orientations that can be found in the Caribbean communities, this panorama should also include the so-called ‘historical’ or ‘established’ churches, such as the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Baptist and Methodist Churches (Howard, 1987, page 28). According to Modood et al (1997, page 299), affiliation to the historic churches is still dominant, so the importance accorded the “black


(4) The contributions of Howard (1987), Gerloff (1992), and Toulis (1997) give the most complete descriptions presently available on Caribbean religious expressions in the United Kingdom; see also Kafifombé’s article (1997). For an overall view of religion in the West Indies see Simpson (1976) and Hurbon (1989). Pentecostalism first appeared in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century and, according to Bauberot (1984) and Séguy (1985), corresponds to the present ‘evangelical’ tendency in Protestantism, characterised by an emphasis on ‘revivalism’ or religious awakening and by a return to the charisma of the primitive church. Other details are given below.

(5) It should be remembered that Rastafarianism is a politicoreligious cult developed in Jamaica from the 1940s. It was inspired for the most part by the message of Marcus Garvey, advocating the return to Africa. Even though this cult maintains ties with organised churches such as the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which was established in England in 1974 by young Rastafarians (Gerloff, 1992, page 54), it bears more likeness to a thought movement than to an established doctrine (on this subject, see Barrett, 1988).

chances” by researchers is not justified. But through his own statistical approach, Modood himself shows that the Caribbean commitment in the ‘black churches’ of New Protestantism is very different from that in the ‘white’ historical churches. In the case of the white churches, the affiliation is more one of religious bearings than of cultural attachment. (7)

Hill’s study (1963; see also 1971) of the integration of Caribbean migrants into the London churches reinforces the idea that the development of black churches in the United Kingdom was caused by the racist attitudes of the established churches, particularly the Anglican church. However, this analysis does not seem sufficient in that it implies that racism was previously unknown to Caribbeans and that they had no cultural roots other than those of the ‘Mother country’, whose religious references they should naturally adopt. This approach underestimates the dynamic nature of religion in the West Indies, where worship is far from limited to the historical occidental churches. (8) To understand the religious experience of Caribbeans in the United Kingdom better, it is important also to retain the idea of a context of “religious innovation”, put forward by Constant (1982, page 56) with reference to Jamaica, to describe the particular response which was developed to counteract the socioracial ideology of the colonial system and which was based on a constant redefinition of religious orientations. It is not surprising that such a dynamism is found in immigrant populations, not because racism was a new defining factor in the Caribbean experience but because racism continued to reflect an old history of social relationships which Caribbeans had not expected to be reproduced in the United Kingdom.

A second important factor in the diversity of the Caribbean religious experience in the United Kingdom is to be found in the profusion of denominations linked to one or the other of the churches listed above. The development of this myriad of churches took place during the decades after the first arrivals landed. Scissions and the creation of new denominations were the driving force for this multiplication. According to Gerloff (1992, page 57), the expansion was the result of diversely motivated conflicts: from simple antagonism between people, to a more profound questioning of the structure of the church—for example of the white American administration. The religious movement is therefore affected by politics, but this is not well recognised. In sociological work on this aspect preference is given to the idea of an unproductive political withdrawal into a supernatural world detached from social reality (Pearson, 1978; Pryce, 1979).

In considering the number of churches and how they are distributed between the different religious families, I used Gerloff’s (1992) listing. In that study, the only one to my knowledge to give a precise account of the movement, Gerloff gives the following description. The total number of denominations linked to black churches is 300 and this includes about 1000 congregations. Of these 300, 205 are largely Caribbean in attendance;

(7) Modood et al (1997, page 299) point particularly to the work of Howard (1987) who he deems to have overestimated the size of the black-led churches. But Howard (1987, page 10) puts forward a smaller number (20% of the Caribbean population) than that advanced by Modood (25%). In turn, Modood’s approach underestimates the lability of the Caribbean religious behaviour, as well as the necessity of having religious references in one’s universe even if actual affiliation is only in the form of sporadic participation in church activities (see footnote 8).

(8) To reinforce his view, Hill (1693, page 4) used statistics to suggest that 54% of the Jamaican population living in Jamaica were members of an established church but only 16% were practising members. In my view even here the true weight of the established churches needs to be reconsidered. What is more, as Seaga (1969, page 5) points out, a declared religious affiliation does not necessarily correspond to the true pattern of worship and does not take into account the possibility of attending several churches. On this subject, see also Toulis (1997, page 100).
81% of these churches are associated with different branches of Pentecostalism (9), 8% in the Holiness branch, 3% being Sabbatarians, 3% being Revivalists, and 4% in various other assemblies. This distribution does not, of course, reflect the size of these churches and only a few, such as the Sabbatarian and Pentecostal branches, have assemblies of more than 5000 members. The administration of the vast majority (73%) of the different denominations is based in the United Kingdom. These denominations are either the result of splits between various groups, or were created spontaneously. They are often small, wholly independent, local assemblies with one or two congregations. It is these churches that contribute to the great abundance of denominations in Caribbean churches. The number of churches (white or black) dependent on headquarters based in the United States is much less—some 23%. It is nevertheless within this last group that we find the more structured organisations with the largest number of members—sometimes well over 1000, such as the New Testament Church of God (NTCG). In addition, there are other denominations (4%) that are directly linked to the West Indies.

However, this classification gives an imperfect picture of the religious movement. The churches tend to form networks and, even though the administration of some may be based in the United States, on an informal level they may maintain stronger links with other churches in the United Kingdom or in the West Indies than with their American counterparts. Such is the case for the NTCG, in which relationships with the white American headquarters is the source of regular questioning from the British officials, to the extent of giving the impression of an effective separation. (10) Locally, the functioning of these assemblies does not in any way reflect their link to the United States: on the contrary, they are much more concerned with maintaining their links with the West Indies. This concern is symbolised by services which are often the occasion to celebrate the departure to or the return of members from the West Indies, or even, as in the church of Southampton, to make a financial offering to enable the Pastor to visit Jamaica.

The members
An estimated 25% of the Caribbean population of Britain (Modood et al, 1997, page 299) are members of the new protestant churches. Other than a few isolated studies (Pearson, 1978; Toulis, 1997), there are very few statistics available on the social class of the members. We could, without much risk of error, be content with the analysis of the main official (the National Overseer) of the NTCG, who states that “the Church

(9) The Pentecostal churches can be divided into two main families, based on their theological differences: the Trinitarian Pentecostals accept the principle of the Trinity, whereas the Oneness Pentecostals believe in one unique divine presence. Gerloff (1992) distinguishes a third family, the Revival Pentecostals that afford greater importance to a healing ministry. The Trinitarian branch is the largest, with 70% of the Pentecostal denominations (estimate based on Gerloff’s church listing, 1992).

(10) The NTCG is affiliated to the Church of God of Cleveland (Tennessee, USA). This Church was the result of a spiritual renewal among some believers from the region of Cleveland who were “initially rural, white and poor”, at the end of the last century (Toulis, 1997, page 103). This congregation then joined the Pentecostal movement linked to the Azuza Street Revival. The implantation of the Church of God in Jamaica goes back to the 1920s, when it adopted the appellation NTCG (Gerloff, 1992, page 52). Concerning the Pentecostal movement itself, its origin is associated with the foundational message of the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles in 1906. This revival was led by the black American W J Seymour, who associated the manifestations of the Holy Spirit (primarily speaking in tongues) with the capacity to overcome racial and cultural differences. (See Gerloff, 1992; 1994). After the ‘miracle’, however, Pentecostalism suffered from strong racial conflicts which were the origin of certain scissions and present tensions. The Church of God is no exception and, in the USA, the leadership is still predominantly white.
though open to all became the centre for social interaction and caring concern for the disadvantaged large population of ethnic people, many of whom lived mainly in the Inner Cities” (Arnold, 1992, page 30). This observation corresponds with the situation in Birmingham studied by Toulis (1997), as well as with that in Southampton. It is in line with the view of the sociologist Pearson (1978, page 347), who holds that “although saints in Britain are of relatively higher status than would be probable in the Caribbean, they still occupy the lowest positions within their respective communities in the host society”. The presence of women is dominant in the assemblies. The NTCG, one of the largest denominations in the United Kingdom, is made up to 67% women.\(^\text{(11)}\) In terms of age, large numbers of young people attend, showing that the population of believers is being renewed. Toulis (1997, page 50) estimates that 40% of the members are less than 30 years old. I myself estimated under-30-year-olds to constitute one third of the congregation in Southampton.

The religious experience

Taking into consideration the large variety of denominations within each religious community, the Pentecostal church is no doubt a dominant force in the Caribbean diaspora. Overarching the abundance of denominations, we find a common religious experience. This experience can be summarised by considering what is generally presented as the main characteristic of Pentecostalism: the importance of the power of the Holy Spirit. Going back to the divine charisma bestowed upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost, the members believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit and in the resulting power of sanctification. To be a born-again Christian refers to the state that results from this meeting with the Holy Spirit, which includes accepting Christ as saviour, living according to his image, and aspiring towards purification. This religious experience is tangible, both physically and emotionally, with the act of speaking in tongues being seen as one of the main signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit. An individual’s receiving of the gifts of the Spirit can happen anywhere, at any time, but this does not lessen the importance of collective worship. For the members, it is essentially this way of worshipping that marks their difference from the established churches. Communion with God, be it individual or collective, is seen as authentic because it is expressed in a new code which is not linked to orthodox liturgy. As we see in the following extracts, emotions, particularly that of joy, are seen to communicate divine presence and are also a main characteristic of the Caribbean religious identity:

“"The Church of God is a charismatic way of worship, a lively way in other words. ... We like when you come in our Church there must be something that touches you, something that appeals to you, because what appeals to you on the inside, you will do on the outside” (Rev. A, Minister of the Southampton Church).

“There’s a marked difference. Black churches are much more livelier. Mind you, white churches are coming round to clapping hands now, and praising out loud. They used to be very conservative in their worship, as cold as the weather were, the people were as cold with their worship. They didn’t worship as lively, now they’re getting music in like we have—they’re beginning to see it, yeah, that’s a nice way of worshipping with music and clapping and shouting. Some of them will not cross tradition, not move across, they think no, it’s not right, this isn’t worshipping” (A, a young woman, member of the Southampton Church).

\(^\text{(11)}\)Statistics from the NTCG headquarters in Northampton for the year 1994. For a view of the implications of this female dominance, see Toulis (1997, chapter 5), who puts forward the idea of religious experience as a reconstitution of sexual identity by the formation of a third element which corresponds to a “Christian identity without gender”.

“I find that in a lot of the white churches you don’t have the freedom of expression that we have in our churches. I don’t think people fully appreciate that when they are in church. When I was in London, in Guildford, in white churches you don’t have the freedom, people aren’t used in the same way that they are here — here you will have someone who has an exaltation or presentation, I have never seen that sort of thing. I am sure it is done in some churches but not that I have seen” (P, a young woman, member of the Southampton Church).

This dividing line, essential to religious identity, is also expressed in the distinction between the world of Christians and that of non-Christians, be they of Caribbean origin or not. But neither in the minds of the members nor in their religious practices is the line between the different groups drawn with the aim of forming a ‘sacred’ community, with this line having the power of dissociating oneself from others, of considering others as permanently different or as strangers. That is why I believe we should refer to an ‘open identity’, that is, an identity equipped with the means, be they imaginary or concrete, to avoid putting up barriers or promoting community rigidity, which would be the natural result of racial categories. We shall now see how this identity is formed.

Building an ‘open’ religious identity

To speak of the Caribbean Pentecostal movement as ‘an open religious identity’ seems nonsensical at first. Hitherto, the members have been seen more as motivated by the desire for separation that leads to a closed world (Calley, 1962; Pearson, 1978; Pryce, 1979). The respect for strict lifestyle (prohibitions with regard to alcohol, smoking, sexual conduct), as well as the increasing number of churches and biblical fundamentalism, have been held to be responsible for the creation of isolated communities, detached from the realities of daily life: according to Pearson, “religious expression within Caribbean settlement acts as a very subtle form of divisiveness”. If we are to go beyond this view of a closed society, however, three areas seem to have been insufficiently explored.

Believers’ discourse and representation of a world without racial frontiers

The first area is linked to the members’ discourse which reflects the way they see the idea of communities. It is, in fact, an ‘imagined’ community — according to Anderson’s (1983) use of the word — that is created through the religious discourse. This representation of the community is not the one that sociologists, attracted by the central model, were looking for. Pearson (1978) compared the Caribbean religious experience to that of other groups from India or from Pakistan, in a desire to show that Caribbeans lack the ideological means which would help in the emergence of the ‘image’ of a national community which remains intact beyond the experience of emigration. Now, we see that Caribbean believers have no great desire to form a parallel between the religious experience and the experience of a nation, either tied to a territory or with an exclusive specificity.

The high value of references to the country of origin certainly has its place in worship. However, the use of Caribbean references seen in the music, the food, the images in the discourse, the celebrations that highlight the bond with the country (departure—return), is not associated with the intention of establishing criteria for belonging to the community. These references remain part of religious practice but still allow another conception to depict and represent the community. For the ideology of the community conveyed by the religious experience is much more that of a utopia of a universal people, finally free from racial and social categories. Faith in the Holy Spirit, whose power is available to all, is the only sign of belonging. Willingness to receive
spiritual messages and to feel the strength of the divine presence are more important for belonging to the community than any other criteria, be they of ethnic, religious, or simply normative, value. As can be seen in a statement by one of the national officials of the NTCG, the space defined by the religious discourse is intended to be intercultural and interracial:

“I still believe today that those who feel the power of the Gospel have to tear down the racial and colour and educational and religious barriers so that we can work together as a people” (Rev. B, National Administrator in the NTCG).

The intercultural discourse is not exclusive to the intellectuals of the movement. The affirmation of this new social structure born of faith can also be seen in the testimony of ordinary believers:

“I don’t think it is a good idea to define what a churchgoer should be, everyone has the potential to be spiritual, it is not for us to define who should be a Christian and who is not. I think God looks at the heart” (P, a young woman, member of the Southampton Church).

“Christ had broken the bond between white and black. Now it’s not that God is going to take all of the black people to heaven but God is gonna take all the Christians to heaven. Whether you’re black, white, polka dot or blue or pink or peach. You know, it doesn’t matter what colour you are, even if you’re striped he’s taking you as long as you give your life to him. You know so that’s just basically what it was, I think” (An, young woman, member of the Southampton Church).

“I thought, once you’re a Christian, okay, if God has entered your life then God, there is no barrier between white and black. God has already sorted out that barrier so people are people” (A, young woman, member of the Southampton Church).

This representation reflects a new topology of social relationships, one that goes beyond frontiers. This is often expressed in the idea of ‘being able to go anywhere with God’. The following testimony, in which topological and topographical markers are italicised, highlights this new geographicity created by the religious discourse particularly well:

“I always say one woman plus God, that is how I see my life, God was always with me in every thing ... I said to people ... I always say that wherever God wants me to go is where I will go. ... My home is anywhere, my mother is still at home and I have a lot of relatives at home. I can live here or in Jamaica, if God wants me to go somewhere else, I will go ... ” (N, middle-aged woman, member of the Southampton Church).

Through the discursive processes it employs, the Christian identity thus seems devoid of racial, social, political, or geographical ties. The following testimony of a young Christian woman, member of an association, shows that this identity does not replace that experienced on a social level: they are superimposed in order to open the way for other possibilities, free from the arbitrary nature of imposed social structures.

“Christ is the centre of my life. I would go because of Christ to a white church. If I could find him in any environment I would go there. Being a Christian is the most important thing, but I must not forget my identity as a black person, that is why I say that I am a Christian first, but also a black person .... I identify my blackness with the group [association], not with the church because I could go to another church, it does not have to be a black church” (B, middle-aged woman, member of Southampton Church).

This testimony also sheds light on the members’ rather general insistence on not wanting to qualify their church as ‘black’, in that this designation seems to contradict
the image they have of the Christian community. When a church is said to be black, this is solely the consequence of the demarcation imposed by the white Christian occidental society and does not correspond to the view the churches have of themselves, as A says in the following extract. She also expresses how immigrants were once again confronted with racist ideology.

“When they first came over ... many of them went to white churches and they weren't accepted, they weren't made to feel welcome. This is why they started their own, like the New Testament. Not with the intention to start up their church but to worship with the people of this country they weren't accepted. Mr F said ... he went to one, and the vicar shook his hand and said don't come back, there's another church up to road that you can go to. This is why black people went to their own churches, cos they weren't welcome in the white churches” (A, young woman, member of the Southampton Church).

The contributions of Gerloff (1992) and Toulis (1997) also point to a social representation free from racial and ethnic criteria. Gerloff (1992, page 233) sees a political attitude in which “Born-again in Black Pentecostal language therefore is not another worldly apolitical position but the very opposite of being a racist”. Toulis (1997) concludes that “one of the issues at play in the conversion was the rejection of an identity inscribed on the skin for one inscribed on the heart” (page 210) “Belief not only remakes the nature of the individual, it challenges everyday ideas about the nature of the group to which he or she belongs” (page 270).

It is worth noting that, as well as in the language specifically related to it, this image of the community is also situated within a series of metaphorical formulations that touch religious life. The topological markers that come into play in these formulations show, once again, a vision which is not subject to categorical limits. Of the four following testimonies, the first is by the Minister who tells how he pictures what will happen after death. The second is by a young man from the church who sees himself as radical because of his political commitments. He shares a vision (considered to be revelations of the Holy Spirit) that he had of Christ while going along one of Birmingham’s streets. The third and fourth are from two women who describe what they feel when they receive the Holy Spirit. These extracts are similar in their expression of a sort of fluidity—a vagueness which is, in fact, a space without limits.

“I think of a grand experience, it doesn't have to take place on earth, God is going to provide a rendezvous in the air where we are no more terrestrial beings. We will become celestial beings. We can walk around in space, in the air because where we are there will be no barrier to experience the joy, with no hindrance . . . . In this life there is so much applied to stop people enjoying freedom. I wanted to come into church this morning, I forgot my key, I had to return home to get the key. When I am living in the celestial world I will not need a key, there will not be a lock on the door. It eliminates so many things” (Rev. A, Minister of the Southampton Church).

“The second week I was going back to Birmingham and the same thing happened, it lasted longer and his arms nailed to the cross . . . it was as if he was colourless . . . it was as if he was half naked, only hair was covered and nailed to the cross, without clothes on his chest, I was drawn to the experience and I didn’t see any colour, like transparent . . . .” (F, young man, member of the Southampton Church).

“It's mystical. It's beyond just the flesh and the blood. It's far beyond that. It's different. It's a different feeling altogether. It's a different realm. It's like probably floating . . . . It's like, almost like floating in the air. Like being so happy and so light and ghostly maybe, you never know, you know, almost like a ghost. But it's not a
ghost it’s just very, it’s different, it’s different” (An, young woman, member of the Southampton Church).

“I started speaking [in tongues] and it was a wonderful feeling, you feel as if you are flying. It is such an experience and while I was walking, I was drunk, drunk with the Holy Spirit. My feet were not touching the ground. I walked round there and I walked with my daughter. It was like a drunk person walking down the road. I had to lean on a post for support. It was the most wonderful feeling” (B, middle-aged woman, member of the Southampton Church).

Believers’ religious practices and the conservation of social diversity

The second area concerns the practices of believers with regard to the daily fulfilment of their faith. It includes a certain number of ‘ways of doing things’, including specific attitudes towards the respect for church rules, which are constantly adapted by members so that they never truly become a factor of separation.

I must first mention the principle of religious belonging which in contrast to the classic religions of a diaspora, principally concerns the individual. The principle according to which religious affiliation is not passed on by right of birth but is achieved by a voluntary act, is common to nonconformist Protestant doctrine, particularly Baptist doctrine. The Caribbean experience seems, however, to widen this sphere. Nowhere is voluntary baptism a tradition transmitted by cultural heritage. Neither is it a state common to all the people that share the daily lives of the believers. Hence it is not representative of a community choice, but is, rather, an intensely personal experience. Bearing this in mind, we should note the significant extent to which the family network encompasses a combination of sometimes very different religious and ethical registers. In the church of Southampton in only two families, including that of the minister, did all the members belong to the same religious confession and the same church. It would therefore be inappropriate to represent the way of life of the believers as being organised within the family structure, with identical moral behaviour and the same values. On the contrary, the family network brings to mind a mosaic, a meeting place for Christians and non-Christians, Pentecostals, Rastafarians, association members, and everyone who belongs to the more or less visible spheres, such as the ‘Hustlers’, identified by Pryce (1979). Moreover, Pryce (1979) indicates that the Caribbean community does not seem to have any “constraining community standards” or “overriding considerations that people are forced to adhere to” (page 30). But rather than deducing, as does Pryce, that this is proof of a “profound division”, I would see this more as not having a centralised view of society. Religion does not have the effect of making the community uniform, any more than it does of dividing it, and the network of family relations plays the role of tying together the different registers. Here, religious belonging adds to the multiplication of references within a group that goes beyond the sphere of religion. A expresses this paradox where, though church differentiates believers from the rest of society, it does not separate the two:

“If you are in the church you are not in the West Indian Club, though the people are still friends and everybody socialises together, but the church and the club draw a line … . The two they get on well together because people from church are very friendly with the people and some of them are related as well, who go the West Indian Club. And in the event of a marriage, death, birth everybody come together. Whether from the church or the West Indian Club, people just get together” (A, young woman, member of the Southampton Church).

This integration of each person in a network of relations reveals a group that is much larger and more vague than that of the church, and leads to a freer interpretation of certain reputedly dogmatic church principles. This occurs in order to have an impact
on relationships with those outside the church. Such is the case for the rules governing
marriage: the birth of a child outside of marriage does not prevent the child being
blessed, and there is no refusal to accept the mother in the church and hence sanction
her irregular conduct. This tolerance, which could be seen in Southampton and which
says a lot about the so-called Pentecostal puritanism, can be explained by a conception
in which sin is not considered to be a permanent spiritual state—rather, each person is
free at any time to return to an authentic faith. The idea of sin being temporary also
shows the vagueness of the boundaries between self and Other. Here, it is once more a
question of the closeness between the different “segments of the community”, accord-
ing to the expression used by one of my interlocutors. This is a result of the blend
between the references that operate within each register. This can be seen in the
following brief passage which illustrates the relationship between the Pastor and a
Rastaman:

“...And this Rastaman came to me and said ‘Preacher, I’d like you to bless my
children’. ‘Why do you want me to bless your children?’, I thought you went your
Rasta temple to do that’. And he said ‘Well I come from a Christian home and so
I want my children to be blessed’. I said ‘OK, if you have enough faith to believe it
then I will do it’” (Rev. A, Minister of the Southampton Church).

It would seem, therefore, that the boundaries created in the field of religion are
quite flexible. This is seen, for example, when some believers roam from church to
church [or “shop around” (Gerloff, 1992, page 57)]. Dissatisfied with the services of
one church, or searching for the church that suits them best, they demonstrate that
religious affiliation is not determined once and for all. Their somewhat critical attitude
towards the different churches shows that they are constantly on guard against any
principle that would perpetuate the existence of a group without their being able to
question that group. Here is how An describes her need to go from church to church:

“At that time I wasn’t close to the church. I used to visit that church but I was in
between moving churches, changing churches. At that church ... they preach non-
sense, if you ask me. I mean, when they’re preaching, it’s just nonsense they’re
preaching. Especially P. I never understand what he’s saying. I never do ... . And
I usually say to him, what do you preach? Because I don’t understand what you’re
saying .... D. says the same thing every week .... she says the same, she says we
should love one another. First week. Second week. We should love one another.
This week. We should love one another. Fourth week, we should ... I know that
now! Yes, it’s like a tape recorder. You know, playing all the time. And so, I get
frustrated because I want more. I know, love one another. Now start talking about
forgive one another, start talking about being, forgetting yourself, start talking
about being humble, start talking about something. Teach us about Jesus and his
entry into the world. Teach us about something different. Teach us something we
probably don’t know or something we do know but we need more understanding
of ... ” (An, young woman, member of the Southampton Church).

This ‘blending together’ or ‘logic of mixing’ can be seen in many other areas of the
religious experience. For example, it is present in the biblical fundamentalism that does
not seem to mean much during a sermon which is more of an oral performance, or a
blend between oral and written language. It is there in the social moments, like the
sharing of a meal during a religious assembly. Here we see the blend between solemn
and casual, between sacred and profane. It is there in the intermixing of different codes
of communication such as musical, corporeal, written, and oral codes, and in the
intermixing of the origins of these codes, be they Caribbean or European. Religion
also functions along lines that each person draws for himself or herself according to
what he or she considers to be his or her personal religious experience which goes
beyond the church group. The comments of A illustrate this principle of blending between the individual and the group, inside and outside of the church:

“I wanted to experience life outside of the Church as well, then I could make a comparison to see which part of my life was better, see what I mean. So I made a conscious decision to leave for a while because I had no experience of life outside the Church... You need Church because you can get a different kind of message and it's good for fellowship. But Christians will always have their own private relationship with God at home. It's not going to Church that gives you a relationship with God. You've got to be able to maintain that outside of Church as well. When I do that I do my own prayers and I sing...” (A, young woman, member of the Southampton Church).

It is certainly in this area of daily life that we see this specific characteristic of Caribbean identity, due to the lability of the social structures which Hall (1994a) highlights, at work. Far from seeing themselves as a closed community, the church members have constant links to the other groups. To go beyond the impression that these churches are isolated communities, it is thus necessary to consider the interrelations within the Caribbean community as a whole. For me, this is the driving force behind their capacity for openness or miscibility. For it is above all in the superimposition of the different registers that were seen earlier, in the communication between the churches via the flexible family structures, that we find their capacity not to isolate themselves.

A network of churches and the absence of a common religious ideology

The third and last area which shows the formulation of an open identity is related to the structure of the religious movement. As the complexity of the area of religion has already been described, I will only now examine a possible interpretation. Through the ever-increasing number of denominations, the religious space develops a dynamism such that it has a flexible form. This structure is very different from the classic model in which one institution has the monopoly on religious symbols and ensures its own durability through the stability of its practices and ecclesiastical tradition. Religion does not lead to overall norms for the Caribbean diaspora. Nor is it used as a means of developing a carefully preserved ideology of ‘intrinsic unity’. The presence of all the families and churches does not lead to the formation of a fragmented space, but, rather, to the existence of a religious network in which the links are as much the result of church history (scissions, creations) as they are the result of the members’ practice of going from church to church, and of the social bond formed by the family network. Here we are in the context of ‘religious innovation’ that Constant (1982) highlights with respect to Jamaica, as well as that of a decentralised or horizontal configuration as described by Gerloff (1994) when she states that the churches “form a reticulate (or polycephalous) organisation, linked together by a variety of personal, structural and ideological ties, which is not linear or bureaucratic, but like a cellular organism” (page 6).

I do not completely agree with Toulis’s analysis in which she states that “rather than define themselves as ‘black’ in White society, church members identify themselves as model ‘Christians’ in an imperfect Christian society” (1997, page 210). The religious experience does more than replace one pattern of dissociation with another. Through various actions—speech, daily routines, institutional practices—it produces the means by which this schema becomes ineffective in its principle of dividing. In a double movement which consists of multiplying the systems of reference as well as linking these systems together, religion transcends the effects of the use of boundary, the understanding of which seems to me to be fundamental. We must now return to our theoretical bearings to understand the implications of this specific way of using boundary.
Religion as a space for the creation of diasporic identity

The Caribbean religious experience is inseparable from its social and historical context. When James (1993, page 165) speaks of a “deep and continued trauma”, he highlights the fact that the experience of migration has continued to bring Caribbeans into contact with old social relations. Since the time of the colonial plantations, the main factors of these social relationships, in which social categories were equated with racial categories and where social inequalities were given racial values which were then used to naturalise social disparities, have remained unchanged. By imposing even more forcefully, through the constitution of inner cities, the principle of social division that had previously been produced by the effects of space, the arrival of Caribbeans on British soil reactivated these divisions in an unexpected way. Evidence of British urban segregation which results in socioracial order can hardly be doubted, in spite of the ‘optimistic conclusions’ of Peach (1996) who has compared the present situation in Britain with that of Chicago in the 1930s. I will not join this debate here. Suffice it to say that in other studies, such as that of Petsimeris (1995) the same information has been applied to another model of reference— that of perfect distribution or social mix instead of the almost total separation of Chicago—and opposite conclusions have been drawn. These studies confirm what is seen as “the strong social and ethnic polarisation of intra-urban space” (Petsimeris, 1995, page 150) of London. As in the work of Smith (1989, page 18), segregation is not considered to be a question of degree: rather, it is seen that whatever the intensity, segregation always produces reification of social categories. Through the materialisation of an ideology, the inner cities depict the use of a symbolic power such as that described by Bourdieu (1993), to impose a schema of order and social division.

I am tempted to say that the codification imposed by physical space is always linked to the use of power. Whoever retains the resources behind material codification also has the power to produce social categories and to maintain ‘Other’ in these categories. This affirmation is directly inspired by the work of Lefebvre (1974). I stress that in his thesis on triplicity as a model for understanding social production of space, Lefebvre (1974, page 48) views “conceived space” as “dominant space” which is governed by power and which, he tells us, “has considerable effects”. How? Through the buildings. In fact, architecture is not seen as the mere putting up of any isolated structure, be it palace or monument, but as part of a spatial context and texture that demands “representations that are not lost in the symbolic or the imaginary” (Lefebvre, 1974, pages 52–53). It is because these representations are physical or material that they have the capacity to remain undiluted and so impose themselves as dominant representations. Lefebvre links two other spaces to this “conceived space”: those of the practices relating to the daily use of different places, and of their mental representations. In this last case, this means imagining a space where it is possible to formulate answers to the imposed order. This is a place where the imaginary takes hold of reality and modifies its meaning. It is made up of a “complex symbolism linked to the underground, hidden side of social life” (Lefebvre, 1974, page 43). According to Lefebvre, this space is less rigid than the conceived space and does not produce order because the representations that come from it “are not bound to logic any more than to coherence” (1974, page 52).

My interpretation of Lefebvre’s thesis resembles that of Merrifield (1993) but is different from that of Soja (1996). Soja tends to put aside the material dimension of ‘conceived’ space and only sees the ‘discursive’ as a means of domination. The fundamental theoretical argument of Lefebvre according to which the effectiveness of an ideology can only be attained by the mastery of the spatial code—through materiality—is thus eliminated for reasons that are based, in my opinion, on the procedures of legitimisation of a knowledge of the ‘Third Space’ used by Soja.
This distinction reminds us of that proposed by De Certeau (1990, page XLV) in which he differentiates between a devotion, by those who have the will to do and the power to impose that will, to strategies which produce and define the place where their power is exercised, from tactical means that do not exist outside of (within the interstices of) these places of strategy. In the same way that Lefebvre highlights the fluidity of a space of representations without the aim of "being coherent" (becoming strategic), De Certeau (1990) sees in the tactical means "ruses" which are "neither determined nor understood by the systems where they develop" (page XLV). I agree completely with Pile's analysis (1997), in which he remains wary of a working of power relationships which is seen as "a separation of one space (of domination) from another (of resistance) ... . Resistance, then, not only takes place in places, but also seeks to appropriate space, to make new spaces" (page 16). I believe, however, that from the moment when forms of resistance have access to the full codification of the physical space, they are no longer in a position of resistance. It is not, therefore, the content of an ideology that determines its belonging or not belonging to an area of resistance, as Pile (1997, page 30) seems to suggest with regard to a democratically territorialised space, but the fact that the spatial means is or is not used by it. But does the distinction between power and resistance not seem more meaningful when related to the distinction between coercive and noncoercive power? For, as we well know, "power is everywhere"; it is fundamental to any social relationship (Foucault, 1976, page 121). Once this power uses the resource of materialised language, then it has the capacity to constrain others. It does this through the prescriptive force of its physicality, through the 'effect of visibility' without which no boundary could be reified or naturalised. Even if democratic, this codification by material space no longer belongs to the area of resistance because it necessarily expresses the mastery of the material form and, with this, the possibility of affirming one symbolic order among all the possible orders. One can, of course, consider forms of access to the resource of material language which are not 'dominating'. When they are expressed, however, this always seems to be done within the context of the narrow interstices of already-codified space. This is suggested by Sibley (1995) in his study of boundaries in the domestic spaces of childhood. On the other hand, the imaginary is necessarily a place of resistance, so long as the representations which it produces can neither be reified nor impose themselves by the use of space.

All of these considerations lead to the interpretation of the Caribbean religious experience in the United Kingdom as the expression of this space of representations defined by Lefebvre. The network of churches does not make up a place of 'strategies' with the aim of crystallising an order and, as De Certeau would say (1990, page XLVI), which need to delimit their place "as their own", so as to define properly the exteriority which they distinguish and dominate. The religious space is, above all, a space which serves to deconstruct the racial order inscribed in the British spaces and to replace them with representations, more mental than material, which are free from this categorisation. Nor is this space of representations that develops outside of the rigid forms of reification of material space the relay of a materialised ideology. Here, religion does not have, according to Bourdieu (1971) a role in conserving social order, nor is it bestowed with any institutional power which would make it an instrument for the legitimisation of power. Caribbean Pentecostalism in the United Kingdom limits itself to promoting that Christian value that would have the kingdom of believers in Christ be built without any racial or social criteria. Such a value implies criticism of the established order, embodied by the historical churches which are considered to have betrayed this message. The double aim is, above all, to undo the web of imposed historical and spatial meanings in order to reach an alternative vision of self.
In relation to our analysis of space, we can therefore retain in the religious experience of the Caribbean diaspora a constant backward and forward movement between, on the one hand, physical forms aimed at the codification of racial categories within the British urban spaces and, on the other hand, representations or counter-representations that form (through the imaginary) another space, another topology of social relationships, different from, though fundamentally linked to, that determined by physical space. In this view are fully integrated the new orientations in the ‘geography of religions’ where it is a question of identifying a “religio-geographical reciprocity” as “located within the contested, negotiated and dilemmatic context of other forms of cultural and ideological meaning, and social and material relations” (Cooper, 1992, page 129). The production of representations calls on spatial references as a means of identifying other categories: in this case, a flexible configuration, a space of everywhere and nowhere, free from the necessity to localise and to make the ‘people of God’ belong to one country, one nation, or one race. From a theoretical point of view, we can see here how the attribution of meaning to the world mobilises topological or topographical markers in the sense that they are inseparable from symbolic practice as a practice dependant on the fundamental use of boundaries.

However, the identification of the meaning of this space of mental representations which forms an ‘open identity’, is not sufficient if we are to appreciate all the achievements of social reconstruction achieved by the Caribbean religious experience. Also at work are elements related to religious practices, those related to daily life, and those related to the institutional organisation. These aspects, added to the performative action of the discourse, give an active dimension to this open identity—one that is not limited to discursive formations. For religion also avoids the development of a unique religious ideology or any dominant one which, although proclaiming its ‘inter-cultural openness’, would become normative with regard to the diasporic experience and would constitute its own exclusive cultural system. The area of religion remains open because it allows for the multiplication of different registers of reference while linking these registers together. Here we see reflected a permanent vigilance with regard to the use of power—one which seems to involve the whole Caribbean community and which is reflected by the possibility, often put into practice, of refusing permanent or exclusive adherence to a single group or reference system. One form of this refusal is seen in the symbolic going from church to church. Could it be that it is the prior long and profound knowledge of the damage caused by constraints exerted by the ‘Other’, of the old permanent experience of racialisation by the ‘Other’ (master, white man, colonialisit followed by the white British citizen), that is responsible for this vigilance? (13) No doubt we must turn to Rastafarianism, as described by Barrett (1988), to find the most ‘complete’ expression of this absence (refusal?) of dogmas erected as cultural systems. (14) But although some of its entities are most structured, through this principle of aggregation and multiplication, the religious space of the diaspora in the United Kingdom, also constitutes a fluid space with no true dominant, collective, normative system.

(13) To illustrate how this vigilance is expressed, here are some comments from the Pastor of the church of Southampton concerning religious doctrines: “... And there are philosophies within the Catholic Church right now that said they has a mandate to rule the world ... I believe that if Church of God, the Church of God that I belong to, had that long history and is not doing anything now, I would say the same thing about it. ... [The Church of God] is a power but in order to utilise that power to affect the world we cannot do that.”

(14) The movement does not have organised congregations, as do other religious cults; it does not have a paid clergy, it does not have a cohesive doctrine in a written form, yet young people from every walk of life and every race are drawn to the movement” (Barrett, 1988, page viii).
This last point necessitates going back to the notion of diaspora. As I pointed out in the introduction, the classic or ‘centred’ vision was followed by a ‘hybrid’ vision (Chivallon, 1997a). This is primarily based on the Afro-Caribbean example and is supported by the influential work of Hall, who sees the principle of hybridity at work in the Caribbean diaspora. That is to say, it is an experience which is defined by “a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*” (Hall, 1994a, page 402). Just as influential, Gilroy speaks of the “Black Atlantic”—a name he applies to the black diaspora of the New World—as a “cultural formation”, defined “through this desire to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity” (1993, page 19). This view resembles that of Glissant, a philosopher who, inspired by the ‘rhizome’ concept of Deleuze and Guattari (1980), sees the Caribbean culture as a culture of the ‘baroque’, one characterised by the principle of ‘relations’ (crossings, connections, network) instead of a principle of birthright (linearity, hierarchy, duality). Because it shows this open dynamism which goes beyond the logic of particularism of classic communities, the religious aspect of the Caribbean diaspora in the United Kingdom lends itself to such a conception of hybridity.

However, as far as the work of Gilroy (1993), Glissant (1990), and Hall (1994a; 1995) is concerned I would only retain the theoretical definitions they allow us to develop. When they leave the empirical question of the concrete modalities of construction of this hybrid identity unresolved I dissociate my views from theirs. I concur with the questioning of Cohen (1997) for whom “Much of the material on the Caribbean Diaspora by writers in the field of cultural studies is both challenging and theoretically sophisticated. But to what extent is transnational identity a lived experience, demonstrated by migrants’ social conduct as well as invented in the minds and emotions of writers, musicians and academics?” (page 150). When Gilroy reveals the different aspects of the Black Atlantic, it is through the production of the “intellectuals, activists, writers, speakers, poets and artists” (1993, page 19). This amounts to saying that those of the diaspora have reached a certain level of celebrity. In addition to the risk of applying ennobling (occidental) values of art to the academic text, there is, above all, the risk of neglecting the creativity of ordinary actors whose names do not have the prestigious ring of Toni Morrison or of Miles Davis, but who write, daily, the plot of this hybrid identity. This hybridity necessarily includes the daily expressions which replace the vague ideas of a never-ending voyage between different cultural universes (Africa, the New World, Europe)—the idea of a “synthesis of national and transnational concerns” (Gilroy, 1993, page 112) or of “vernacular modernity” (Hall, 1995, page 11)—with terms which are those of a situated and lived identity.

I would, however, tend to agree with Hall when he asserts that “the representation is possible only because enunciation is always produced within codes which have a history, a position within the discursive formations of a particular space and time” (1994b, page 257). Could we be on the point of moving away from an evanescent, vague, inconsistent conception of hybridity through such an affirmation? This concept is presented by Bhabha (1994) when he speaks of a ‘third space’ and is adroitly criticised, by Rose (1995, page 372), as being “theoretical” and not “corporeal”, “analytic” and not “lived”. It is perhaps because this hybridity refuses to define the codes that make it up that it remains purely intellectual, detached from daily realities. This sort of hybridity can only downplay the concrete forms of social life because it brings into play a sociality in which no use is made of the concept of boundary. Now, and this is what Hall in fact points to, there is always some use of boundaries in any social relationship, in any identity, or in any system of ‘codes’.
From this point of view we can learn a lot from the Caribbean religious experience in the United Kingdom. This experience shows that the use of boundaries, though necessarily present in the production of symbolic defining elements (separation between Christians and non-Christians, between authentic faith and established religion, between religious families, between different segments of the community), does not give rise to varying forms of division and exclusion. It teaches how the discriminatory effects of such a usage can be overcome by a number of practices (visiting different churches, eclecticism of references within different families, religious innovation, etc) that maintain a social diversity as well as a network of relations with the Other and her/his universe of references. It is here, in my opinion, that hybridity is best situated as a socially constructed form which simply expresses how the members of a group find, daily, the ways and means of making permeable, and thus less violent and constraining, the boundaries that necessarily give meaning to the world and to its social relationships.

To conclude, in relation to our approach relative to space, I regard Caribbean religion in the United Kingdom as being based on three essential characteristics. First, it evolves in a mental space of representations where, by proposing a social vision free from the weight of social categorisation, a direct response to the materialised racial ideology of the British urban spaces evolves. This space can be equated to an area of resistance in that it is neither 'strategic', according to De Certeau’s (1990) use of the term, nor dominant, according to Lefebvre’s (1974) approach, as it is neither reified nor imposed through the codified means of physical space. Second, it shows the way in which the discursive formations which are destined to bring this social vision into evidence necessarily include the use of topological markers to show the content, both intercultural and interracial, so confirming the semantic power of spatial resources. Third, Caribbean religion in the United Kingdom shows how the use of boundaries can deter the implications of its principle of separation by the maintenance of a social diversity which is, however, linked together, thus preventing the formation of ideological centralism. Far from the intellectual, somewhat distant, conceptions of hybridity, this use gives access to the concrete modalities of the social construction of a hybrid identity, where the boundaries between self and Other, far from being absent, are constantly negotiated and subject to the influence of social diversity. These boundaries are thus rendered incapable of conferring social particularisms.

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