A Few Remarks on Identity and Space in Patrick Chamoiseau’s
*L’empreinte à Crusoé*

The article conveys some remarks on how the question of spatial identity is being reflected in Patrick Chamoiseau’s novel *L’empreinte à Crusoé*. The theme itself that the writer has chosen, the literary myth of Robinson Crusoe, leads from the very beginning to the heart of this problematic, on a fictional level (where it is deepened still by the mention of the protagonist’s amnesia), as well as on a meta-fictional one – since the novel is a rewriting/reinterpreting of the story of Robinson, and therefore an intertextual approach: somewhere in-between Defoe’s Robinson and Michel Tournier’s, but also establishing links with the other versions of the famous hero, as provided by writers such as Saint-John Perse or Derek Walcott, Chamoiseau’s Robinson, clearly influenced by the poetics and philosophy of Édouard Glissant and seemingly fascinated by Pre-Socratic thought, by Parmenides and Heraclitus, manages the exploit of gaining a distinct literary identity, and offers the reader an example of a hero who, obsessed by Alterity, comes to convey the mystery of the world through art.

In addition to the comparative study of the myth, this article’s aim is to analyze, on a narrative level, and taking into account the various planes of significance and the different stages that lead to the metamorphosis of this last Robinson, the ways in which the identity of the protagonist is built, in its link with space/the World and Alterity. The three successive “birth” processes that the hero undergoes clearly indicate the engaging in an initiatic path that leads him to the final “illumination”. The exterior-world adventures of Defoe’s “original” Robinson, as well as Michel Tournier’s character, where the action structures itself in (physical) space but in accordance with logics derived from a deciphering of the world on a mythical and symbolic level, and where the Other is present in a human, lively form which comes to switch roles with the Same, alterity becoming identity – this adventure becomes, in Chamoiseau’s novel, chiefly one of the interior life, making this particular work resemble not so much a narrativised “survival manual”, like in Defoe’s case, but rather a manual of spiritual exercises. This article aims to analyze the consequences and implications of these elements, in respect to a “metaphysic” of the text.