Asserting, Renewing, and Expanding: The Littérisation of Contemporary Haitian Literature

Bevin Herrmann-Bell

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By: Bevin Herrmann-Bell
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Dr. Judith Woodsworth	_____	Chair
Dr. Hugh Hazelton	_____	External Examiner
Pier-Pascale Boulanger	_____	Examiner
Dr. Paul Bandia	_____	Thesis Supervisor

Approved by

_____
Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

_____
Dean of Faculty

Abstract

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by Bevin Herrmann-Bell

As a result of the "cultural turn" in translation studies, attention has shifted away from the back and forth study of source and target text and has begun to consider the many complexities that go into shaping a nation's cultural space, as well as how literature, translations, and other expressions of culture are embedded within their social contexts. In studying the emergence of various types of translations in their respective socio-political contexts, it becomes apparent the production of these literary goods is influenced by both internal and external constraints on the literary system. This can be witnessed in the form of internal class, race, and power struggles, or the intrusion of external elements in the form of colonialism, post- and neo-colonialism, or the unequal distribution of symbolic capital held by monolithic literary and creative markets. However, these literary products can also play an important role in shaping the system itself.

This is especially true of emerging literary markets such as Haiti's, where translations have often served as significant motivators for the development of an indigenous literary system as writers and translators respond to their postcolonial, socio-cultural, and political realities. Yet, while these creative and political (re)writing processes help to build an initial cultural capital for the emerging literary system, international consecration by way of competitive literary awards and translation into major languages brings otherwise marginalized national literary cultures into the realm of World Literature. In her seminal work, *The World Republic of Letters*, Pascale Casanova calls this process *littérisation*.

This thesis aims to trace one of the paths for the *littérisation* of contemporary Haitian literature. In so doing, I hope to reveal the significant role translation has played in propelling Haitian literature into the international domain. I will begin by describing the first examples of written Kreyòl through the early translations of French source texts. Next, I will discuss the push by writers like Félix Morisseau-Leroy to establish Kreyòl as a vehicle of popular poetics through the use of adversarial translations of Western Classics. In the following section, I will cover the growth and expansion of Kreyòl and popular poetics into new literary genres through the postmodernist rewritings of Frankétienne. Finally, I will explore how Haitian literature has had to translate new linguistic and cultural realities in the diasporic writings of Edwidge Danticat, leading me to conclude with where Haitian literature stands internationally today. The thesis will focus on specific instances where these Haitian writers mediated their particular circumstances through translation, resulting in watershed moments in the evolution of the literary system, and ultimately allowing for Haitian literature to rapidly evolve and expand over the course of the past century.

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1 Introduction

> *"Each generation must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it, in relative opacity."*
>
> (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961, Frantz Fanon, Trans. Richard Philcox)

In the introduction to *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work*, Haitian-American author Edwidge Danticat reflects on the obstacles Haitian writers historically have faced, writing:

> Perhaps there are no writers in my family because they were too busy trying to find bread. Perhaps there are no writers in my family because they were not allowed to or could barely afford to attend a decrepit village school as children. Perhaps there are no artists in my family because they were silenced by the brutal directives of one dictatorship, or another natural disaster after another. Perhaps [. . .] my blood ancestors—unlike my literary ancestors— were so weather-beaten, terror-stricken, and maimed that they were stifled. As a result, those who somehow managed to create became, in my view, martyrs and saints (Danticat, 2010, n.p.).

The conditions that Danticat describes are unfortunately all too familiar to Haitian society, and literature would seemingly take a back seat to some of the more pressing development and human rights issues that face the country. And yet, from these incredibly difficult circumstances, the spirit of literary creativity managed to take root, and within the past century Haitian literature has gone from barely having a standard Kreyòl orthography to evolving its own unique poetic system, one established enough to reflect diverse experiences and to be conveyed in numerous languages. In spite of her physical separation from her motherland, Edwidge Danticat assumes her place among the ranks of notable Haitian authors

precisely because of the (sometimes dangerous) work of her literary predecessors, who paved the way for this literary tradition to come into being.

While more long-standing cultures were allowed to develop their language and poetic systems over time as the civilizations that nurtured them rose and fell, Haitian society was relatively recently constructed from the fragmented identities that were thrown together under the brutal era of French colonialism. It is from the inhumane conditions of slavery that Haiti's language and culture emerged as a way to forge a common link between disparate individuals during a time of unimaginable hardship. The subsequent drama, folksongs, and popular fables that resulted from the legacy of shared hardship reveals, according to Haitian writer Yanick Lahens, a 'universal' dimension of human experience, one that transcends seeking out the "western white master" for approval (Zimra, 1993, p. 80) and seeks to exist for and within itself. Likewise, the Kreyòl language, also a product of this colonial experience, became in the words of writer Frankétienne, "a medium for the expression of the Haitian cultural marooning bearing thoughts, emotions, feelings, and messages of a highly revolutionary scope" (cited in Taleb-Khyar, 1992, p. 387). But while Kreyòl culture has popular appeal in Haiti, the quest to establish an authentic national literary culture has faced many obstacles as it continues to struggle against the linguistic and cultural hegemony of the Global North.

As a result of the "cultural turn" in translation studies, attention has shifted away from the back and forth study of source and target text and has begun to consider the many complexities that go into shaping a nation's cultural space, as well as how literature, translations, and other expressions of culture are embedded within their social contexts. In studying the interplay of poetic devices and their respective contexts, it becomes apparent the production of literary translations are influenced by the internal and external constraints on the system. This can be witnessed in the form of internal class, race, and power struggles, or the intrusion of external elements in the form of colonialism, post- and neo-colonialism, or the unequal distribution of symbolic capital held by monolithic literary and creative markets. However, these literary products can also play an important role in shaping the system itself. This is especially true of emerging literary markets such as Haiti's, where translations have

often served as significant motivators for the development of an indigenous literary system as writers and translators respond to their postcolonial, socio-cultural, and political realities. Yet, while these creative and political (re)writing processes gradually help to build an initial cultural capital and the promise of literariness* of the emerging system, what grants the poetic system its ultimate authority is consecration ("recognition by autonomous critics" (Casanova, 2004, p. 127)), and consecration brings otherwise marginalized national literary cultures into the realm of World Literature. In her seminal work, *The World Republic of Letters*, Pascale Casanova calls this process *littérisation*.

This study attempts to trace the *littérisation* of contemporary Haitian literature through the translations of three Haitian authors whose (re)writings significantly increased the visibility of Haiti's national literary culture. According to Casanova's model, there exists a complex market of relations in the literary world, wherein literature is treated as a type of commodity and writers and other intermediaries participate in transactions in order to amass literary capital, either for themselves, or for their national literary cultures. Literary cultures at the center of this market are those with the most established literary traditions, and with the greatest number of influential works; those on the extremes of the periphery are typically literarily disinherited, oral language cultures. As little as a century ago, there was barely an orthography of the Kreyòl language, and the poetic inspiration guiding a popular national literature was still banished to the margins by the inferior status imposed on orality. Since that time Haitian literature has expanded to include Nobel Prize nominees and international best-sellers. At the heart of this unexpected success is the translator, who, in the words of Casanova, is the "indispensable intermediary for crossing the borders of the literary world" (Casanova, 2004, p. 142). Interestingly, many of the most influential translators in the Haitian tradition are writers themselves, and as I will explain later, "translation" in this context is not necessarily constrained by the horizontal transfer of content through language as we understand it in its most common meaning. Therefore, by bringing Haiti into direct confrontation with political, linguistic, cultural and market forces, writer-translators have campaigned for Haiti's literary culture, brought it out of insularity and provincialism, and

*"[. . .] the literary credit that attaches to a language independently of its strictly linguistic capital" (Casanova, 2004, p. 135).

against all odds put Haitian literature on the map. By exploring the political, linguistic, cultural, and market constraints of specific Haitian writer-translators who have arguably enjoyed some of the greatest success both domestically and abroad, I hope to trace this *littérisation* process and show how translation has been instrumental in Haiti's literary ascent.

This study will concentrate on works by Haitian authors that have had considerable impact on the emergence of a distinctly Haitian national literary culture while using translation as a key device in doing so. The works chosen for my study display innovation and poetic experimentation, and have made a lasting impact on the development of subsequent works in the Haitian literary system. Furthermore, each work responds to the very specific challenges of their postcolonial situation, negotiating past and present, political and economic constraints, and resulting in works that challenge these circumstances through creative expression. Finally, while there have undoubtedly been many significant works that served to strengthen Haiti's literary tradition by negotiating Haiti's complex language and identity issues, translations[†] have provided the battleground sites for some of the most significant renegotiations and mediations in order to bring a once nonliterary language-culture into literary existence on an international scale.

1.1 Theoretical Context

According to Casanova, a common language, common literature, and most of all "national character" (i.e. an established poetic system) ensure a country's symbolic capital stock in the world market (Casanova, 2004, p. 292). But where does this leave so-called "literarily disinherited" countries who have little to no authentic literary tradition of their own? Countries still living under the soft (and sometimes hard) power of their colonial pasts face obstacles in the form of political, economic, cultural, and/or linguistic dependency. In predominantly oral societies, these obstacles are only felt more keenly in a world that confers greater artistic value on the written word. However, it is precisely because of this distance

[†]Here I am not only referring to interlingual translation, but works of literature that bring into mediation two or more languages, cultures, or world views, thereby constituting a translative act.

from the center that marginalized, predominantly oral societies are positioned to become among the greatest innovators as they strive to overcome literary, linguistic, and political obstacles. It is for this reason that Casanova writes:

> The *littérisation* of the oral language makes it possible not only to manifest a distinctive identity but also to challenge the standards of literary and linguistic correctness—which are inseparably grammatical, semantic, and social—imposed by literary, linguistic, and political domination; and also to provoke dramatic ruptures that are at once political (the language of the people as nation), social (the language of the people as class), and literary (Casanova, 2004, p. 293).

However, even as the literary market of a marginalized nation becomes more self-sufficient, it does not exist in a vacuum. As Dominique Combe points out in his preface to *Postcolonial Poetics: Genre and Form*, the genres most used in postcolonial literature (novels, autobiographies, theatre, essays, epics, and so on) are all largely based in Western tradition, and must therefore, in some way or another, relate to the Western canon through Homi Bhabha's notion of "mimicry." He adds: "How could postcolonial writers resist the 'anxiety influence' of the Western world represented by Dickens, Flaubert, Tolstoy?" (Combe, 2011, pp. viii-xi) As we will see in Chapter 2, before writers like Jean Price Mars, Jacques Roumain, and Felix Morisseau-Leroy, as well as other Antillean writers like Aimé Césaire and Edouard Glissant, introduced ideas of Indigenism and Antillanité, early poetry in Haiti (and much of the Caribbean) closely imitated European styles such as the Romantic lyric or the exoticism of the Parnassians (Bernabé et al., 1990, p. 887). Even within the early stages of Haiti's journey into literariness, writers like Morisseau-Leroy were in the service of building their language capital and were therefore more invested in engaging directly with Western literary norms through confrontation and subversion than forging new genres or methods for channeling the literariness of Haitian culture. And yet Combe also acknowledges that the consensus in the postcolonial academic community is "postcolonial writers have no other choice than to subvert the imported genres they have inherited from colonialism" (Combe, 2011, p. ix).

But first, as André Lefevere points out, practice precedes theory when discussing emerging poetic systems, and "[change] in the poetics of a literary system very rarely occurs at the same pace as change in the environment of that system" (Lefevere, 1992, p. 30). In

cases like Haiti, even the act of writing in an once-oral language sets the precedent for what will later become a codified poetics of literary system. This is where we see how as the poetic system forms, the process of *littérisation* begins to unfold. As writers begin to reach back to their own oral and cultural traditions for inspiration, and as their texts gain recognition by relevant authorities both within and outside of the emerging literary market, these written works experience a "magical transmutation" from "literary inexistence to existence, from invisibility to the condition of literature" (Casanova, 2004, p. 127). Those wishing to study this development must consider the circumstances that have shaped the decisions made by the authors to understand *why* these specific choices were made, and more importantly, why the work was accepted by other influential members of the system. This latter point can prove to be challenging in some cases, especially in countries where authoritarian rule dominates most systems for transmitting ideas and information and works cannot be circulated and discussed openly. Furthermore, globalization has had a profound impact on how languages, cultures and literatures interact from different points on the globe, and consequently, the type of literature that is accepted on the global market. The writer/translator has also become a global subject as immigration, exile and changing national demographics become more commonplace.

However, in spite of all these variables, there is still one uniting factor in the development of the works discussed in this thesis: by belonging to a marginalized language culture and with a developing literary tradition, Haitian writers are almost necessary faced at some point with the question of translation. Indeed, of these authors belonging to marginalized literary communities, Casanova writes: "As 'translated men,' they are caught in a dramatic structural contradictions that forces them to choose between translation into a literary language that cuts them off from their compatriots, but that gives them literary existence, and retreat into a small language that condemns them to invisibility or else to a purely national literary existence" (Casanova, 2004, p. 257). Furthermore, translation theory today by and large attempts to take these components into consideration in some form or another, and the result is an emphasis of the study on what translations *are* (given the circumstances of their production) rather than what they should be (based on the perhaps misguided

authority bestowed upon so-called "original" works) (Gentzler, 1998, p. 219). Interestingly, the result of such a shift in understanding is why Gentzler writes: "[...] the margins have become so diffuse that much so-called original writing is now viewed as incestuously related to translation" (*ibid.*). Indeed, Casanova shows that bilingualism is a form of "embodied translation", and Moradewun Adejunmobi's case for "compositional translation" offers that original post-colonial writing in a colonial language, in fact, *is* translation of (in her example) African thought into a European language (Casanova, 2004), (Adejunmobi, 1998, p. 165). Adejunmobi's model can easily be read in the works of Haitian expatriates (like Edwidge Danticat mentioned earlier), allowing for Haitian literature to be read across languages and geographic expanses. And yet, even as translation enables writers to explore increasingly diverse modes of conveying their experiences, these artists can trace their shared literary lineage through poetic systems that ultimately take root in the popular experiences of the Haitian people.

In order to understand the context behind the works discussed in this study, in the following sections I will give an abbreviated version of the formation of the Haitian socio-political space, as well as how this space evolved from a turbulent confrontation of cultural identities.

1.2 At the Foundation of Language and Identity in Haiti

At its origins, Haitian culture and society is truly a melting pot. Acquired by the French in 1697 through the Treaty of Ryswick, Haiti (then called Saint-Domingue) was at the crux of France's Caribbean enterprises. By the mid-eighteenth century, this territory went from being an island outpost of sorts to the most profitable colony in the West. At its height, it produced 60% of the world's coffee and 40% of the sugar imported in Britain and France, all on the backs of nearly 700,000 slaves brought from Western Africa (Haggerty, 1989, n.p.). This astounding economic success can be largely attributed to the enforcement of a meticulously maintained caste system, one that still marks the social strata of the country today.

The two extremes of the power spectrum were the *grands blancs*, the plantation owners of French descent, who were also, it should be noted, in the vast minority; and, at the other end, the West African slaves and their descendants, representing the majority of the population. However, in between the two extremes were varying degrees of mulattoes, whose status in society directly corresponded to the concentration of their whiteness, and free blacks, or *affranchis*. This social order determined who could marry whom, who could wear certain clothing or carry weapons, who could own property, and who could attend certain social functions. It also determined who could be educated, and as a result, is at the foundation of the French language's continued preferential status in Haiti. In being a privilege only afforded to those with the means and the pedigree to go to school, French became synonymous with status in Haitian society.

At the expense of the privileged position of French language and culture was Kreyòl. While the birth of this language is far more involved and complicated that space permits here, in a briefly stated version, the Kreyòl language itself emerged from the Western African languages and dialects belonging to the slaves, such as Ewe or Fon, and French, as well as some borrowed words from the Taíno, the indigenous people of the island (Lang, 2004, p. 129). As a means to "break" the newly arrived slaves, slave masters would intentionally separate individuals belonging to the same linguistic community. With time, the rudimentary means of communicating, or pidgins, between these different language groups blended with the French of the slave drivers, resulting in a highly complex and blended Creole language. This became Haiti's lingua populi, spoken by nearly everyone on the island, from the slaves and *affranchis* to the Haitian-born *blancs*.

However, while Kreyòl is the common linguistic currency in Haitian society, it has been traditionally viewed as the vehicle of folk, or "low" culture associated with the illiterate rural masses in Haiti. This association hasn't been helped by the fact that Kreyòl has historically existed as an oral language and its transition into a codified, written language had not gained traction until the second half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, the lettered intellectuals of Haiti have historically chosen French as the vehicle of "high" art, and emulated French literary styles well into the twentieth century. Even studies conducted on the ethnogenesis of

middle-class Haitian immigrants to the United States have found that the French sphere of influence still holds a place of prestige when self-identifying. In a study on consumer attitudes of Haitian-American immigrants, the principal subject of the study, Odette, exhibited signs of culture swapping[‡] by distancing herself from "those people"—the lower class, monolingual peasantry—claiming to belong to the Haitian francophone elite instead. And yet, even in this instance the popular appeal of Kreyòl is undeniable, with Odette proudly declaring "Creole is our language" (Oswald, 1999, p. 307).

The tensions between language and class continue to be an issue that many Haitians negotiate as a part of their "Haitian" identity, which raises compelling questions about post-colonial power dynamics and class structures when preconceived notions on the hierarchy and use of language are challenged. However, while authors have mediated the way in which culture is embedded in social institutions through their literature, politics can also play a profound role in the mediating process as we will see in later chapters.

1.3 The Dynamics of Language and Culture

In her study documenting the initiatives in London to teach Creole to Caribbean migrants to the UK, Hubisi Nwenmely asserts that language is a "powerful symbol of identity," and one that can be used to reclaim one's cultural heritage (Nwenmely, 1996, p. 3). From this perspective, it should come as little surprise that the authors of *Éloge de la créolité* would liken the suppression of the creoleness in post-colonial Caribbean societies to cultural amputation (Bernabé et al., 1989). Indeed, the uneasy dynamic of French-Kreyòl relations in Haiti has historically led to the privileged status of French expressions of culture over the popular Kreyòl culture. But Nwenmely goes further to explain how language attitudes are shaped according to social, economic and political forces, resulting in perceptions of inferiority and imbalance of representation in domains such as education, commerce and religion (Nwenmely, 1996, p. 6). As I outlined earlier in section 1.2, these negative associations towards Kreyòl have already taken root in Haiti, and their effects are reflected in the country's lagging

[‡]Culture swapping is defined by Oswald as "[moving] between one cultural identity and another as [individuals] negotiate relations between home and host cultures"(Oswald, 1999, p. 303).

literacy rates and the continued status that French language and culture enjoys in Haitian society.

The very hybridity of Creole languages nearly ensures that most Creole-speaking societies will maintain a certain degree of diglossia with their colonial substrate. After all, having access to a major metropolitan language such as French or English has undeniable benefits when seeking access to a more international audience. Furthermore, in the case of Haiti, there is an established history of experimental Caribbean writing in French that did not necessarily seek to replicate traditional French literary style. Jean Price-Mars (*Ainsi parla l'oncle*, 1928) and Jacques Roumain (*Gouverneurs de la rosée*, 1944), for example, both celebrated Haiti's traditional, peasant culture in French, and both works were well received internationally (Efron, 1955). However, what is significant about the power dynamics of a diglossic society are the ways that language use become hierarchically representative of deeper power struggles.

Jan Mapou, head of the Kreyòl advocacy group, *Sosyete Koukouy*, declared: "We always said, and we repeat, that the French language is ours in Haiti, it is a heritage that we should not lose. We did not come out in favor of Creole in order to lose French. French and Creole, those two fully matured languages, are supposed to advance arm-in-arm" (cited in Hebblethwaite, 2012, p. 38). While it is true that French *is* an inexorable part of Haiti's heritage, its transcendence has also disproportionately affected the country's development in many key areas of economic, political and social life. Furthermore, the notion "Creole" in Haiti carries not only a linguistic significance, but deep cultural significance as well, as Haitians are only recently beginning to realize that their acceptance of Kreyòl is not a condemnation to marginality, but instead a "central element in the sociocultural heritage of Haiti" (Hilaire, 1994, p. 200).

In order to achieve a recognized status in an international arena (and one that is dominated by the unrivalled transcendence of English), it is thus all the more imperative that literature renegotiate the cultural, social and political factors defining the country's linguistic space. In the context of Caribbean diglossic societies, the negotiating process must therefore in some way challenge the standards established by the dominant, metropolitan

language in order to encourage further development of the emerging language and literary system. In the particular case of Haitian Kreyòl, the first steps to paving a poetics distinct from the residual effects of French colonialism is to confront the French/Kreyòl dichotomy head-on and to assert the ways in which Kreyòl and language and culture must be recognized on its own merits.

1.4 Outline

The aim of this thesis is to follow the *littérisation* process in the Haitian literary tradition. The process will take into account the first examples of Kreyòl writing, the push to establish Kreyòl as a vehicle of Haitian poetics, the growth and expansion of Kreyòl and Haitian poetics into new genres, how Haitian literature has survived transnationalism, and finally, where Haitian literature stands internationally today. This thesis will focus on specific instances where Haitian writers mediated their particular circumstances through translation, resulting in breakthrough moments in the evolution of this literary system.

Chapter 2 explores early experiments in Haitian literature, including some of the first instances of written Kreyòl. I will then trace the poetic patterns that emerged from early works, leading to Haiti's first great Kreyòl work, *Antigòn* by Felix Morisseau-Leroy, a rewriting of Sophocles' Antigone. By transposing the story over a Haitian context, and by choosing to write this Western Classic entirely in Kreyòl, Morisseau-Leroy strengthened, as I will show, the Haitian literary system by subverting the norms of Western genre and form while simultaneously campaigning for a distinctively Haitian language and literary culture.

In Chapter 3, I will discuss the impact of Duvalierism on the literary system, as well as the ideological responses to oppression and corruption put forward by Frankétienne through his unique concept of Spiralism. I argue that through his near-obsessive rewriting of his texts, Frankétienne reflects the political and cultural realities of his period while bringing Haitian literature out of its period of initial accumulation of cultural and literary capital. What results is a rejection of the "us"/"them" dichotomy that has characterized much of early Haitian writing, and indeed postcolonial thinking, introducing instead an innovative and

experimental writing through his radical concept of perpetual creation. By creating "original" versions of his texts in both Kreyòl and French, Frankétienne opens Haitian literary creation to one of the strongest literary markets in the world, while simultaneously building his own nation's stock of literary capital.

Chapter 4 focuses on the new generations of Haitian writers, especially those who grew up in the Diaspora. Despite their distance from their language and their land, these writers are still very much a part of the Haitian literary tradition as they continue to forge a voice for their unique experiences in the language of the Other. Their very existence is an "embodied" translation, a mediation between distinct identities, both linguistically and culturally and these writers (often writing in the language of their host countries) are able to bend the language to force it to reconcile with their Haitianness. I will focus in particular on Haitian-American author Edwidge Danticat, as by seamlessly weaving English and Kreyól, and American and Haitian cultures in her texts, she creates a new path for honoring and remembering the oral traditions handed down from generation to generation.

2 Emergent Kreyòl Writing: Establishing a Haitian Poetics

> *"But don't you think that Creole would isolate the Haitian poet even more from the rest of the world?"*
> *"In any event, those who are writing insignificant little sonnets in the purest classical French are not less isolated, since—admit this to yourself—no serious foreign reader ever loses his time reading the imitative monkeyshines, unless it's for a laugh. Furthermore, our popular folk songs are the work of authentic poets who do not know how to write. And they're known by a lot more people than the chef d'œuvres of the ineffably great Haitian poets!"*
>
> (*Récolte*, 1949, Félix Morriseau-Leroy, English translation cited in Efron, 1995)

When approaching the question of transitions from a predominantly oral to literary language use, Walter Ong writes: "It is useful to approach orality and literacy synchronically, by comparing oral cultures and chirographic (i.e. writing) cultures that coexist at a given period of time. But it is absolutely essential to approach them also diachronically or historically, by comparing successive periods with one another" (Ong, 1982, p. 2). In this case, the synchronic relationship between orality (in the form of Kreyòl) and literacy (as inherited through French colonialism) in Haiti's literary history facilitates such contrastive studies. However, while it is certainly important to understand how the transition from oral to written language evolved historically, Ong is referring here to their diachronic study dating back many centuries—in some cases millennia. Kreyòl, on the other hand, is a relatively young language, having only emerged from the slave colonies sometime between

the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Yet, it is precisely the newness of Creole languages that has attracted the interest of some researchers, who view this opportunity as a kind of "laboratory" (Hagège, 1985) for the study of language development on a global scale. One of the greatest advantages that Creoles can offer us in this regard, is that they condense the frame of reference for diachronic study to a period of only a couple of hundred years, and major developments (such as the establishment of written literary tradition) can be witnessed within one's lifetime.

However, while this primarily takes account of the semantics involving the emergence of writing in oral societies, it does not consider the development of the language system's distinct poetics, or steps to attain literariness for oral thought processes; in short, it does not account for capturing the *spirit* of the nation in writing. Furthermore, Ong confines primary oral societies to those who are totally unfamiliar with writing; however, Kreyòl meets many of the criteria of a primary oral society as outlined by Ong (1982) (additive oral style, use of aggregates, redundancy, and repetition, reliance on proverbs and riddles to store shared knowledge, dynamic relationship with the audience, and so on) while also having been exposed to writing and literature through Haiti's European lineage. It is therefore a more complex issue than simply noting how an oral and literate language can coexist within a society. As we will see, the cultural and literary capital awarded to the French language gave it great power over oral Kreyòl (which, by virtue of being excluded from the literary game, initially had little to no capital of its own). It is for this reason that Casanova argues: "Writers engaged in a struggle on behalf of their nation must therefore build up literary resources of their own from nothing: they must construct a literary tradition out of whole cloth, a tradition with its own themes and genres that will achieve respectability for [the] language [...]"(Casanova, 2004, p. 275).

2.1 Early Kreyòl Writing

Literary Creoles are, in the words of George Lang, "willed into existence by highly motivated intellectuals who aim to demonstrate the maturity and wealth of their language, much like

the initiators of major European 'national' literatures during the Renaissance and thereafter" (Lang, 2000b, p. 17). In this regard, Lang states that the history of Kreyòl literature must be "read against the prerogatives and the constraints of the Haitian elite [the educated class], who have constructed it from within their own convoluted situation" (Lang, 2004, p. 131). Here, Lang is careful to differentiate between written and printed Kreyòl literature and the oral literary culture of Kreyòl that has existed in the form of tales, proverbs, and songs since the language's beginnings. Kreyòl owes much of its rich orality to its West African substrates, but the urge to record the language is undeniably compelled by the French influence over Haiti's educated elite. Furthermore, the early principles determining how Kreyòl should be fixed into writing were applied following the guidelines governing writing in French (Hilaire, 1994).

Looking at the history of written Kreyòl, then, we will see that the first recorded instance of a written Kreyòl in a literary format appeared in the mid-eighteenth century with a poem entitled "Lisette quitté la plaine." It has been attributed to the pen of a white plantation owner named Duvivier de la Mahautière, and, as would be expected of a person of his position, follows many of the poetic norms (theme, motif, and subject matter) of French poetry of the period (Lang, 2004, p. 131). There would be other early poems written in Kreyòl that sought to explore the language's literary quality while staying safely within the structure of established European genres: Oswald Durand's "Choucone" (1883), and François-Roumain Lhérisson's "Grand-maman moïn dit: Nan Guinée" both subject Kreyòl to European rhyme schemes and organization, but each also takes steps to introduce new stylistic and thematic aesthetics that convey a more distinctly "Haitian" origin. While there are many discussions to be had on the individual contributions of these (and other) early Kreyòl works, they fall outside of the scope of my study. Instead, acknowledging that these works laid the foundation for later innovation, I would like to turn to the first significant instance of merging Haitian poetics with literary Kreyòl. This came in the form of Georges Sylvain's *Cric? Crac! Fables de la Fontaine racontées par un montagnard haïtien et transcrites en vers créoles* (1901). Georges Sylvain was a Paris-educated writer, lawyer, and judge. Upon receiving his law degree, he returned to Haiti with the purpose of pursuing his "intellectual

and artistic endeavors," a feat he more than accomplished by organizing conferences, writing and producing theatrical performances, and by publishing in scholarly journals (Airey, 2008, p. 53). George Lang points out that "[the] device of putting La Fontaine into Creole had already been used earlier in the century by the Martinican François Marbot in his 1846 *Les bambous*, but to the end of reconciling, ideologically at least, slaves with the futility of resistance" (Lang, 2004, p. 132). Sylvain's purpose, suffice it to say, was not to ensure the oppression of his audience. Rather, his rewriting of La Fontaine using Kreyòl showed an awareness that Haiti's popular language can be used to represent certain realities of Haitian life, and perhaps more significantly, that these realities were deserving of representation.

One example of the poetic adjustments Sylvain made in his adaptation of La Fontaine is in his portrayal of characters and their setting. Stories such as in "L'Aigle et le hibou" became "Laig', Macaq, avec pititt Macaq" ["*Eagle, Monkey and Little Monkey*"] (Lang, 1990), and in the fable of "Le Rat de ville et le rat des champs," the city rat serves his cousin an authentic Haitian feast:

Nan gnou biffett étrangé	*The buffet came from overseas*
Plein tout qualité mangé	*and was loaded with goods.*
Té gangnin là: gnou soup'-zhuitt	*There was oyster soup,*
Avec ti piment zouézeau;	*peppered fowl*
Tomtom' avec calalou;	*tom-tom with calaloo,*
Zabocat avec tasso.	*avocados and tasso.*
Té gangnin gnou platt ragoût	*There was a plate of stew*
Faitt nan gen ragoût longtemps,	*like it used to be made,*
Avec trip'-cabritt, ponm-tè ...	*with goat tripe and potatoes ...*
Yo rhélé ça caïman:	*We call it caïman*
Cé bagay' bon sans manman!	*and it is the best.*
	(*ibid.*, pp. 682-683)

However, while such adaptations could be seen as a superficial "window-dressing" of the form of these fables, Sylvain also makes an impact on the stories' substance by drawing from Haiti's repertoire of proverbs (*ibid.*, p. 685). Proverbs in Haiti, much like in the West African "parent" societies from which Haiti derives many of its popular cultural practices, are a significant vehicle of discourse on social and political issues, and as such, they give insight into enduring cultural models of experience (White, 1987, p. 152). By weaving Kreyòl proverbs in with La Fontaine's familiar narratives, Sylvain relied on his audience's ability to

translate the metaphorical imagery as well as the cultural understanding behind the message, thereby appealing to a uniquely Haitian poetic awareness.

Although Sylvain laid the groundwork for a more organized movement towards a literary Kreyòl by bringing La Fontaine into the Haitian space, his innovation was still somewhat constrained by the period. The orthography of Sylvain's Kreyòl was highly Gallicized, which is admittedly not the fault of the author; at the time, Haitian Kreyòl was still viewed as a patois or a dialect of French rather than a language in its own right, and so its transcription was naturally bound (or at least, heavily influenced) by the rules of orthography and punctuation of its French substrate. Furthermore, like most well-educated and literate Haitians, Sylvain belonged to the elite class in Haiti, and so his themes, while indicative of a willfulness to "Haitianize" La Fontaine, were still filtered through the influence that French colonial attitudes held over the class. This is most clearly demonstrated by his attitudes towards Vodou, the predominant religion of the peasantry. In the prologue, Sylvain writes:

Si khè zott quimbé ça ben,	*If your heart takes these tales as told*
Zott va vini bon chriquin	*you will become good Christians.*
Bouè tafia, tombé nan bois	*Drinking home-brew, frolicking in the woods,*
Pèdi nanm yo nan danss-loi ...	*risking your souls as you dance voodoo...,*
N'a beau dit moin, cé métié	*say what you will, these are the ways*
Pou moun' qui pas pè Bon-Gué!	*of those who do not fear the Lord.*
	(Lang, 1990, p. 682)

And yet, although Sylvain's presentation of Haitian language and culture is filtered through the perspective of the bourgeoisie, there are a few undeniable points that must be kept in mind. Firstly, Sylvain's accomplishment should not be undermined by his upper-middle class origins. Although it is by no means the majority experience, the realities of the Haitian bourgeoisie are just as much a part of the overall Haitian experience, and it stands that he managed to take the vernacular language and apply it in such a way that reflected both a uniquely Haitian setting and a uniquely Haitian cultural understanding. Furthermore, as the title indicates, most of the folktales are told in the form of 'Cric?' 'Crac!' (call and response) stories, "which display and celebrates the significant pastime enjoyed by Haitians of all classes"(Airey, 2008, p. 53). Therefore, Sylvain's *Cric? Crac!* provided one of the earliest examples of the distinct literary and poetic capabilities of Kreyòl writing.

One of the most effective advocates of Kreyòl's legitimacy as a vehicle of high culture came nearly 50 years later in the form of writer Félix Morisseau-Leroy. Kreyòl advocacy groups have long touted Morisseau as the father of Haitian Literature, stating that the poet/playwright "is like our Dante, our Shakespeare, our Volatire" (cited in Cantor, 1996, n.p.). There is even a mural outside the Libreri Mapou* in Miami depicting Morisseau reading folk tales to children gathered around him. Indeed, ask any Haitian author today, and they will probably tell you that the Creole Renaissance in Haiti was Morisseau's legacy.

2.2 Félix Morisseau-Leroy's *Antigòn* (1953)

One Saturday afternoon in 1953, a group from Port-au-Prince's artists and intellectuals were engaged in a heated debate: Could Kreyòl, the oral language of Haiti's masses, ever be capable of such high artistic expression as French? This question was one that had long simmered in Félix Morisseau-Leroy's mind. Having been raised in a well-educated Haitian household in Jacmel, Morisseau grew up with the rare privilege of being fluent in both Kreyól, his mother tongue, and French, the language of formal education and high society. And yet, he rejected the monopoly that French had over education and artistic expression. Just as Racine and Goethe adapted Euripides' *Iphiegenia* into French and German (Hoffmann, 1997, p. 567), Morisseau believed that Haitian Kreyòl was just as capable of receiving works of classic literature. Therefore, during that afternoon debate when they asked "What do you think should be written in Creole?", his response simply was: "Everything... Including Antigone!" (Cantor, 1996, n.p.) Morisseau would later admit that he had merely brought up Antigone as an example, since he considered Antigone to be among the highest works in world literature (*ibid.*). However, his colleagues were not content to let this challenge go, and pressed him to follow up on his declaration. A month and a half later, Morisseau would complete *Antigòn an Kreyòl*, a major milestone in the Haitian literary canon.

In his Foreword, Morisseau sheds some light on his rendition of this Greek classic, saying:

*Libreri Mapou is a Haitian book store, cultural center, and headquarters of the Sosyete Koukouy located in Little Haiti in Miami. It has been a significant resource for retaining Haitian art and culture, especially for the diaspora community in Miami, and it holds one of the largest collections of Kreyòl books outside of Haiti.

> This is a story that was told a long long time ago, and has already been told in many countries and translated into many languages... I kept what I could from the original story, and then I added to it the sun of Haiti, a certain way the Haitians understand life and death, courage and sorrow, luck and misfortune. I added the saints, the souls of the dead, the spirits of voodoo, the spirits who watch over the roads, the cemeteries, the doors, the trees, the fields, the sea, the rivers, who rule over rain, wind, storms in Haiti, and who much resemble what people call the Greek gods... And then I let Antigone, Ismène, Marraine, Roi Créon, Tirésias, Hémon, Filo, speak exactly the way a Haitian would speak in their place. (Hoffmann, 1997, p. 567)

Here, Morisseau touches on some of the most significant contributions his rendition of *Antigone* makes to Haiti's emerging poetic system; he did not write in French, the language traditionally reserved for "high" art; his gods and spirits belonged to the Vodou pantheon, not the Greek (or even Catholic), thereby revealing his intent to "Haitianize" the Greek Classic; and, perhaps most politically, he defied the rigid formality of the Western theatrical experience when his theatre refused to be confined by the "Italian proscenium arch of the French Classical tradition" (Ruprecht, 2001, n.p.). In introducing these elements to the classic story of Antigone, Morisseau quite literally set the stage for many of the artists and intellectuals of the era who sought to reclaim Haiti's colonial history, thereby giving way to a popular theatre, and subsequent popular literary movements (Fradinger, 2011, p. 129). Thus, these three acts not only made significant inroads to legitimizing Haiti's national literary culture, but also legitimized a way of life that had long been maligned by the Francophile Haitian bourgeoisie.

2.2.1 Language Choice: A Literary Creole

In Suzanne Romaine's article "Pidgins and creoles as literary languages: *Ausbau* and *Abstand*," she argues that being a predominantly oral language (meaning, being without a standard written form, as is the case with the majority of the world's languages) should not be the sole grounds upon which a language is relegated to an inferior status. Romaine explains that writing tends to develop out of a functional need for book-keeping, commerce, and record-keeping. Literary functions can sometimes take centuries to manifest in a language's written form. A telling example of this is the English language, arguably one of the strongest

written languages in the world today in terms of the sheer volume of output and readership. Romaine points out while English has been a written language since the seventh century, certain genres of English literature were not established in writing until the fifteenth (drama) or even the eighteenth (novels) centuries. Conversely, a language can fulfill literary functions within society without being written. This was and continues to be the case in Haiti. In fact, Dr. Ernst Mirville, an early Kreyòl activist, coined the term *oraliture* to describe Haiti's rich culture of "oral" literary culture in the forms of *kont* (fables), songs, *timtim bwa chèch* (riddles), and proverbs (Hyppolite, 1998, p. 94), (Hebblethwaite, 2012, p.6).

Beyond the natural delay between the emergence of a written language and the development of its written literary tradition, Romaine gives another possible explanation for why Creole-speaking countries in particular experience a lag in writing down their *oraliture*: "In the majority of countries where pidgins and creoles are spoken the act of writing itself is largely a middle class occupation restricted to those who have not only a sufficient degree of education, but also time to write" (Romaine, 1996, p. 273). In this regard, Haiti certainly struggles: recent statistics put Haiti's illiteracy rate at 61% for its population over 10 years old, only 21.5% of the overall population enrolls in secondary school, and a mere 1.1% enrolls in university level education (Hebblethwaite, 2012, p. 18). Furthermore, the middle class in Haiti has historically been rather small, meaning that the majority of the country belongs to the under-educated peasantry. The lack of a written literary tradition has only further reinforced the feeling among speakers of Creole languages that it is a mere bastardization of the European parent language and therefore is incapable of "serious literature and artistic expression outside the comedic domain" (Romaine, 1996, p. 273). However, as we witnessed with the English language, the way to solidifying a reputable literary tradition is most easily accomplished by entering through speech-based genres (namely theatre and poetry). The clearest explanation for this tendency is that the performative nature of these genres is receptive to the orality of language. But, to go a step further, because of a rich storytelling history that has been transferred from Africa, one could argue the tradition of *oraliture* actually allows these genres to become "fuller" through the use of Creoles, as they expose these seasoned genres to new world views (*ibid.*, p. 274).

As stated earlier in section 1.2, the history of political and social forces determining the hierarchy of language in Haiti has overwhelmingly come out in the favor of French. However, even by removing the question of translation from its specific post-colonial context, Creoles are nearly always competing with "metropolitan languages," or languages that George Lang identifies as being more advantaged and that can serve as "a sort of antonym for 'creole language"'(Lang, 2000b, p. 13). In this particular case, that Morisseau proposes to bring a Greek classic (arguably well outside of the French-Kreyòl struggle that has long resided within Haiti) into Kreyòl in order to test the language's worthiness is therefore all the more significant. Although he admits that his work was based on Jean Anouilh's French translation of the Greek original (at that time, Morisseau did not read Greek), Morisseau's translation was not meant to be a direct response to the question of language identity specific to Haiti. He expresses as much when he omits any mention in French when he says, "I don't think Kreyòl is any worse than Greek" (Malagodi & Knapp, 1987, n.p.). Rather, his bringing Antigone to Haitian literature was an act meant to prove the Kreyòl language's linguistic capabilities in its own right. Yet, Morisseau did more than find a horizontal equivalence in Kreyòl to the metropolitan Antigones; *Antigòn* serves as a repository for the "initial accumulation" (Casanova, 2004) of Haiti's cultural and literary capital.

2.2.2 Vodou Performed, History Rewritten

Morisseau made many strong choices by introducing Vodou to classical Greek theatre. From the beginning of both print and performed versions of the text, our attention is immediately drawn to the fact that this is not Antigone as we know her in her Greek form. In the 1959 performance of *Antigòn* in Paris[†], the Foreword to the play was recited by three masked women to the "rhythm of a Yanvalou dance belonging to the Vodou rites of Rada"(Fradinger, 2011, p. 135). When the curtain rises, the audience is transported to a small, rural village somewhere in Haiti called Thèbes (Shelton, 2000, n.p.). Trees surround a small house with seemingly unremarkable furnishings: some chairs and a table. However, it is later apparent

[†]Fradinger writes that knowledge of this aspect of the 1959 performance comes from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Site Richelieu. Since the same troupe performed in both Paris and in Haiti when the show initially opened in 1953, Fradinger postulates that it is reasonable to assume that this prologue was also part of the original production in 1953.

that this isn't just any room; this is the *péristil*, the open area where Vodou ceremonies take place[‡]. Traditionally, at the center of the *péristil* is the *poto mitan* (center pillar), which serves as a kind of lightning rod that channels the *lwas* (Vodou spirits) and allows them to communicate with the profane world (Desmangles, 2010, p. 192). Like the *poto mitan*, the bodies of the *houngans* (priests) and *mambos* (priestesses) presiding over the ceremony themselves also become a source of power in these ceremonies, and nearly everyone in attendance can become channels of the *lwas* through the act of "possession." Possession in Vodou ceremonies is often represented as a "rider" (the *lwa*) "mounting" (possessing) a "horse" (the participant), and devotees wish to be used in this way as it signifies "a profound willingness on the part of a lwa to intervene in the profane activities of humankind" (*ibid.*, p. 193). What results is a highly dramatic and performative ceremony; one could even call it a "theatre." In fact, the notion of Vodou as a form of theatre is not new, and has been the subject of study by Haitian intellectuals such as Franck Fouché (*Vodou et théâtre*, 1976) and Antonio Louis Jean (*La crise de possession et la possession dramatique*, 1970). Although these first forays into delineating the "theatre" of Vodou were consciously limited, more recent studies have gone as far as to state that Vodou ritual contains distinct, formal theatrical elements such as impersonation, mise en scene, audience, chorus, music, dance, scenery, costume, plot, character, thought, and diction (Saint-Lot, 2003, pp. 18-19). There is much to be said about the significance of calling attention to the parallels drawn between Vodou ritual and theatre, but this will be further discussed in the context of an emerging popular theatre in section 2.2.3. I would like instead to further outline thematic poetic elements of Vodou that appear in Morriseau's rendition of *Antigone*.

One of the most remarkable parallels that is drawn between Vodou and the classic tale of Antigone is through Morisseau's use of zombification. As we know in the Greek version, Antigone is desperate to bury her brother Polynices out of familial and religious duty. According to ancient Greek religious beliefs, a soul that has not received proper funerary rites is damned to wander along the river Styx, never gaining entrance into the underworld.

[‡]The full significance of the *péristil* setting in inspiring new theoretical and popular movements in Haitian theatre will be discussed in section 2.2.3. At this time, I prefer to focus on the *péristil* in its functional role in Haitian Vodou.

Likewise, burial rites in Vodou are essential to ensuring that a body doesn't turn into a *zombi*, or a body without a soul. While ethnographic studies on zombifcation have shown many of the beliefs surrounding the phenomenon are unclear and sometimes contradictory (Ackermann & Gauthier, 1991), the essential premise is that a body must be properly laid to rest in order for the soul to pass into the next life; otherwise the body may be resurrected and controlled by a human "master" using black magic. Therefore, when Antigòn resolutely insists upon conducting her brother's funerary rites, her insistence takes on a similar urgency, as did her pleas in ancient Greece.

In Haiti, however, zombification has a much deeper historical and cultural significance. Haitian Vodou tradition views the zombi as "a being who lacks a 'conscious' life, a sense of agency, and the states of sentience, feeling, and awareness, associated with 'typical' human functioning" (*Lessons Learned from Haitian Voodoo: Zombification and the Altered Conscoiusness Experience*, 2008, n.p.). Morisseau does not miss the opportunity to explore this theme in his *Antigòn*. Creon, upon realizing that Antigòn had buried her brother, Polynices, against his orders, calls upon Baron Samedi and his wife Granne Brigitte, the *lwa* who watch over the dead, to help him turn Antigòn into a zombi. Taking a dagger, Creon plunges it into the water, turning it red with blood. By invoking this act of sorcery, Morisseau is in fact summoning one of the most haunting images of Haiti's past, as zombification in Haiti has long been symbolically linked in Haitian collective memory to the practice of slavery. Therefore, when Creon traps Antigòn's soul in a vase of water, he's not only threatening to deny her passage to the afterlife, but he is trying to enslave her. Of this scene, Morisseau remembered: "Wherever the play was performed no one laughed during that scene. It is a serious matter. They didn't laugh in Haiti. They didn't laugh in Paris. They didn't laugh in New York. They didn't laugh in Africa. They didn't laugh in Montreal" (Morisseau-Leroy, 1992, p. 668). Morisseau's conscious thematic use of Vodou in Antigone thus achieves a deeply political meaning as well. Fradinger argues that this political motive is particularly significant with regards to how Haitian intellectuals began to view the Haitian revolution, Haitian identity, and the revolution's "war within the war" (2011, p. 143).[§] To understand

[§]Here, Fradinger is referring to Michel-Rolph Trouillot's writings on the consequences of the Haitian Revolution on the inhabitants within Haiti. Likening the event to a national fratricide, he explains "the

how the use of Vodou becomes a political symbol rather than a religious one in the context of *Antigòn*, we must turn to the intellectual movements spurred by the US occupation of Haiti.

As explained in section 1.1, the tendency for the educated elite in Haiti to adopt a French identity can be traced back to the caste system of Haiti's colonial period. However, a remarkable moment of racial epiphany occurred during the U.S. occupation from 1915-1934. After the gruesome deposition-by-dismemberment of President Guillaume Sam, the American government grew uneasy at the bloody turn of events. Though the pretense of intervention was to quell the ensuing anarchy, it is more likely that the American interest lay in the fact that the power vacuum opened up the presidency for Sam's anti-American rival, Rosalvo Bobo (Renda, 2001, p. 82). Robert Lansing, then U.S. secretary of state, wrote on the situation: "I confess that the method of negotiations [...] is high handed. It does not meet my sense of a nation's sovereign rights and is more or less an exercise of force and an invasion of Haitian independence. From a practical standpoint, however, I cannot but feel that it is the only thing to do if we intend to cure the anarchy and disorder which prevails in that Republic" (*ibid.*, p. 31). Within weeks of setting up their puppet president, Philippe Sudre Dartiguenave, U.S. forces were mobilized within the country, and new representatives were established in all levels of government, from central veto-wielding government officials to administrators in the provinces (Haggerty, 1989, n.p.).

It is telling that, in spite of some initial clashes in resistance to the occupation, this marked one of the most stable and peaceful periods in Haiti's history. However, as Richard Haggerty puts it, "the order [...] was imposed largely by white foreigners with deep-seated racial prejudices and a disdain for the notion of self-determination by inhabitants of less-developed nations" (*ibid.*, n.p.). In stark contrast to American attitudes, the postcolonial Haitian bourgeoisie had long aligned themselves with Western, and especially French ideologies, and viewed the Haitian Revolution as "the daughter of the French Revolution" in this regard (Fradinger, 2011, p. 144). But in the eyes of the largely white, American peace-keepers, there

war within the war is an amalgam of unhappy incidents that pitted the black Jacobins, Creole slaves and freedmen alike, against hordes of uneducated 'Congos,' African-born slaves, Bossale men with strange names [...] slave names quite distinguishable from the French-sounding ones of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Alexandre Pétion, Henry Christophe, Augustin Clervaux, and the like." (Trouillot, 1997, p. 67) Essentially, this internal war is at the heart of class struggles within Haiti even today.

was no distinction between a mulatto banker and a black peasant farmer; the Enlightenment notions of equality, fraternity, and liberty borrowed from the French Revolution were largely dismissed and even mocked. Indeed, author and painter Frankétienne confronts the racial undertones of the occupation head on, explaining: "Because it was not a gift but a conquest, our independence was considered by the Christian Western world as a slap on the face of white supremacy" (cited in Taleb-Khyar, 1992, p. 387). The indignation at the blind discrimination shown towards all colors and castes of Haitians "jolted loose" the Haitian intellectual scene "from the strange cultural paralysis which had prevented them from acting in accord with their perceptions of realities" (Efron, 1955, p. 15). Out of this initiative of self-discovery came artistic, ideological, scientific, and political movements, beginning with the *Indigéniste* movement which sought to legitimize Haiti's African and non-Western origins. It also brought about a reexamination of Haitian history from a non-European perspective. Of the most radical reclaimings of history is the notion that Vodou was "crucial, rather than circumstantial," to the success of the Haitian Revolution (Fradinger, 2011, p. 137). Moira Fradinger explains:

> For this generation, revolution was powered neither by the French ideas of the Rights of Man, nor for that matter by the yellow fever that helped decimate Leclerc's French troops, but by the African slaves who rebelled, by their unifying rites and language, by the messianic force of Makandal's Vodou poisoning of the whites in 1757, of the legendary Vodou ceremony at Bois-Caïman in 1791 and the violent Petwo spirits that were summoned for the blood oath to start the uprising [. . .] To recover Vodou was to recover the force of the historical agents that allowed for Haiti's radicalization of the ideal of modern equality—those agents who were excluded by the colonial masters, by the postcolonial elite, but also by the historians who have read the Haitian revolution as 'the daughter of the French Revolution.' (*ibid.*, p. 144)

Therefore, as with Sylvain's adaptations of La Fontaine, Morisseau's writing of Haitian Vodou deities, traditions, and superstitions does more than "window-dress" a timeless, classic story as a Haitian one; by invoking Haiti's Vodou traditions in his *Antigòn*, Morisseau is subtly nodding at some of the more substantive rewritings that occurred at the time which challenged the very foundations upon which Haitian society had constructed its own national narrative.

2.2.3 Reclaiming the Stage: A Populist and Political Theatre

As mentioned above, because orality is an inherent component of theatre, Creole languages find a natural home within the genre, making it more of a "popular" genre within creolophone communities than novels could ever be (Hazaël-Massieux, 2000, p. 23). However, the orality of Kreyòl language isn't the only reason many Haitian authors view theatre as the natural medium for appealing to their audience. Vodou, in its capacity as religion to the masses, has also played a significant role in engendering a popular theatre in Haiti. As I wrote in section 2.2.2, the crisis of identity that resulted from the first American occupation caused a critical re-examination of the elements of Haitian culture and society that are distinct from the French sensibilities that had governed over the Haitian intelligentsia since the country's beginnings. Therefore, while participants in this "New Movement" (Efron, 1955) were concerned with experimenting with popular language and imagery in their work, they were also seeking ways to break out of the constraints of European genre, and Vodou would be a key component of this move. Indeed, Fradinger writes: "The theatrical elements present in Vodou rites were, for Moriso's generation, the origins of a Haitian *popular* theatre that would serve as a counter-movement to an elite European theatre"(Fradinger, 2011, p. 133).

This shift in favor of Haiti's popular culture can be witnessed through symbolic changes (as we've seen through the conscious change in language and subject matter), but it is also present in the transformation of physical space of the theatre itself. These transformations are significant in that they not only challenge the theatrical tradition (traditionally defined by impressive buildings boasting grandiose proscenium stages framed by expensive red curtains), but also the relationship between the audience and the actors. Already, much of peasant culture ("Rara" festivals, work collectives, coq fights, and Vodou ceremonies) is based in collective performance experiences, so non-western sites of ritual and performance were well established in Haiti's popular and Vodou culture. And so, as Alvina Ruprecht points out, when staging choices such as theatre-in-the-round and hemicycle were implemented in many theatrical performances of the era (including some of Morisseau's), these playwrights were "integrating theatricalized versions of these ceremonies into [their] theatre" (Ruprecht, 2001, n.p.). The *péristil* is one such integrated element. With theatre-in-the-round and hemicyle

(or ampitheatre) stages, the actors are projected into the audience, and the fourth wall, long upheld in much Western high theatre, is rendered moot. As a result, the rigid viewer/viewed relationship between audience and performer is relaxed, and the theatre-going experience takes on the intimacy of "the ritual spaces of the story teller" (*ibid.*). Morisseau himself supported this concept, stating that "the péristil where Vodou ceremonies take place is also a theatre stage where a perfect spectacle takes place" (cited in Fradinger, 2011, p. 133).

These willful renegotiations of the high theatrical space so as to incorporate the "low," folk culture of the peasantry signaled a new school of thought that would produce numerous sub-movements and manifestos. As the pulse behind much of the public displays of peasant culture, Vodou would naturally provide the theoretical basis for the New Movement. Indeed, Franck Fouché, one of Morisseau's intellectual contemporaries and author of *Vodou et théâtre* believed that many of the ritualistic aspects of Vodou (songs, dances, decor, dramatic language, audience participation, and most significantly, the possibility of 'possession') and the setting of the *péristil* were already stages of "pre-theatre" (Fouché, 1976). Interestingly, these performed rituals are also at the foundation of the very Western theatre tradition that such Haitian authors were writing and translating against. It is widely believed that the basis of ancient Greek theatre developed from rituals performed in honor of the Greek god Dionysus. Ceremonies would begin with songs (which later evolved into lyric poetry) and dances recounting the god's death and re-birth. Gradually, Greek tragedy began to take shape as the narrative, literary aspects began to overshadow the ceremony's religious purpose (Saint-Lot, 2003, p. 45). From there, it was a natural transition: "the lyric poetry [which, itself, grew out of ritual song] strictly sung before, added the first lines to be spoken and introduced the first actor. Spoken dialogue then was established between the chorus and the impersonator. The chorus was later de-emphasized" (*ibid.*).

Conveying Haiti's political realities through writing would become a pillar of popular literature in the country, especially towards the second half of the twentieth century as the use of written Kreyòl began to gain momentum. *Antigone* would take on similar political impetus by Morisseau's hand. Morisseau once said: "Of course, it did not seem that the original *Antigone*—Sophocles' *Antigone*—was a political play, but as far as I am concerned, it

was always political. As a matter of fact, it is the reaction of a young woman to the decision of a king. A young woman has decided to give her life in order to have the right to say 'No' to a king!" (Morisseau-Leroy, 1992, p. 668) However, the political implications of Antigone's defiant "No" take on two distinct approaches in Morisseau's writing, as is apparent in his two renditions of the Angitone story, *Antigòn* (1953), and a later stage adaptation entitled *Wa Kreyon* (1978).

The most clear political motive behind *Antigòn* is that of populism and breaking out of the post-colonial cycles of classism and oppression that resulted from Haiti's stratified society. Looking at Morisseau's personal history, it is not difficult to understand how his early life inspired his defence of Kreyòl and Vodou which would play "a crucial role in the cultural politics that shaped Haitian national identity after the end of the US occupation" (Fradinger, 2011, p. 130). Even though he was young when the Americans first occupied Haiti, Morisseau admits that the presence of the "white"¶ Americans left a profound mark on his sense of patriotism. He explained:

> They were enemies to me whenever I saw them [...] We have a certain type of education that we receive from the history of the war for independence. To us, we are a nation which has fought a war to get its independence, therefore any people coming from outside to [threaten] that independence should be taken out, should be driven out. Therefore to me, it was a matter of honor to fight the Americans (Malagodi & Knapp, 1987, n.p.).

As a result of the Occupation, Morisseau became an avowed Marxist, and used his writing as a tool for political resistance and to empower the masses. Miami-based poet and translator Jeffery Knapp, when asked about the contributions of his friend, said: "Writing in Creole was an act of politics, and act of courage. [Morisseau] realized, What's the point of writing in a language [French] that no one can understand?" (cited in Cantor, 1996, n.p.) Indeed, Morisseau's dedication to intervening on behalf of the un- and under-represented Haitian masses is well-documented, and he has explicitly expressed "[...] it is for [the peasants] that I write, not for all of those other writers. I write for the peasant. I write for the people of Haiti" (*ibid.*). *Antigòn* premiered in Port-au-Prince at the Rex Theatre, where it ran for

¶Morriseau explains that "white" in Haiti is synonymous with "foreigner," and even goes on to describe the first time he saw a "black white" in the form of an African-American soldier (Malagodi & Knapp, 1987, n.p.).

two nights. Morisseau then brought *Antigón* to the garden of the College of Agriculture in Damiens, where it was performed in the open for an audience of peasants seated on the ground (Fradinger, 2011, p. 127). Of this performance, Morisseau said: "And that was one of my proudest moments" (Cantor, 1996, n.p.).

In her thesis, Isabelle Airey argues that as a result of the lived and inherited experience of colonial domination, the act of "claiming" a language is to face one's dark history, to embrace and rectify the culture that was suppressed in favor of another, and is a decisive step to claiming an identity of one's own (Airey, 2008, p. 10, 127). In this regard, *Antigòn* is a symbolic act of defiance to the imposed Western linguistic, cultural and political systems that had governed the Haitian population since the island's colonial beginnings. Morisseau's "cultural intervention" translated Antigone into Antigòn, her Haitian descendant, and as a result, gave way to a Haitian historical drama in the language of the people (Fradinger, 2011). Therefore, in this regard, Antigòn's "No" can be understood as saying "No" to the colonial status quo, to the unequal balance of power and to the historical, cultural, and linguistic hegemony that France and other metropolitan centers continued to exercise over Haiti.

Antigòn also conveys more overt political subject matter as well, with King Creon's character being rendered as a chief of a rural area who was "set up by the Haitian army and was an agent of political dictatorship in Haiti" (Morisseau-Leroy, 1992, p. 669), leading many to assume that this was meant to serve as a symbol of Haiti's most recent brushes with totalitarianism. However, the political implications of Morisseau's writing are not so simplistic as that. While the Duvaliers are perhaps the most well-known Haitian dictators of the twentieth century, François Duvalier hadn't yet seized control of Haiti when *Antigòn* was first performed at Port-au-Prince's Rex Theatre in 1953. In fact, while Papa Doc would eventually become infamous for his corrupt and abusive regime, Morisseau and Duvalier were intellectual colleagues of sorts and initially ran in many of the same circles that formed in response to the identity crisis spurred by the American Occupation (Cantor, 1996) (Efron, 1955). Therefore, *Antigòn*'s reference to the politics of Haiti is not in response to any one specific Haitian political figure, but rather a general commentary on Haiti's long history of authoritarian leaders.

This, however, would change. By 1957, Haitians came to view *Antigòn* as a prophetic account of Duvalierism. Indeed, as if it were straight from the streets of Thebes, in 1959 Duvalier's private soldiers, the *tonton macoutes*, ambushed the funeral procession of political rival Clement Jumelle, hijacked the hearse, and roared off with a caravan of heavily-armed army vehicles in tow. No one dared retrieve the corpse, and "[the] flowers that spilled from the hearse lay in the street for days" (Farrell, 1963, n.p.). There have been allegations that the dictator wanted his rival's body to practice black magic[‖]. Morisseau witnessed the events of that day, recounting "[. . .] I watched it. I was there. And whenever I describe it, I must say, I died that day. It's a miracle that I am alive, because I died that day. Because, for what I did, I would normally have been killed, but they spared me" (Morisseau-Leroy, 1992, p. 669). Morisseau, in fact, had reason to be grateful for his life. He expanded his scope of political writing while working as Chief Editor at *Le Matin* (Haiti's morning newspaper), and he continued his campaign to empower the majority through promoting the use of Kreyòl in writing and education. Insiders of the Duvalier government warned him that there was a threat, not of his being arrested, but of being killed (Malagodi & Knapp, 1987, n.p.). This only worsened after the funeral of Clement Jumelle. Therefore, as a result of increasing political scrutiny, 1959 was also the year that Morisseau decided to go into exile. He was invited to tour with his theatre troupe and to perform *Antigòn* at the Théâtre des Nations in Paris. At 6 a.m. on the day he was to depart for Paris, he was visited by Duvalier's personal secretary (along with armed guards) with a request to accompany him to the Presidential palace. Although the reason for the summons was to finalize travel arrangements, Morisseau realized that he could no longer stay in this political climate, saying: "As soon as I got on that plane, I knew I was in exile" (*ibid.*).

Leaving everything behind (including his wife and children), Morisseau lived out many of the following years of his exile in Africa, and in Ghana and Senegal in particular, where he continued to lobby for accessible, popular art. While in Ghana, Morisseau was recruited as National Organizer of Drama and Literature, and stood behind Ghanian president Kwame

[‖]Jumelle was known as a talented intellectual, and some have even speculated that Duvalier, the self-proclaimed 'Spiritual Leader of the People,' wanted to use his brain in a Vodou ceremony (Fordi9, 2012, n.p.). The veracity of such claims, however, is as of yet unverified

Nkrumah's ideas and policies on African Personality, African Socialism and the use of art and culture in nation-building (Gibbs, 2007, n.p.). Antigone would also take root in Ghana at Morisseau's encouragement, even as his patron increasingly began to resemble the play's antagonist** (*ibid.*). Soon after the overthrow of Nkrumah's leftist government, Morisseau relocated to Senegal, where he found himself once again a cultural diplomat, this time working for the government as director of the Senegalese Federation of People's Theater (Cantor, 1996, n.p.). It would be during this period in Senegal, while some of the worst atrocities were being committed by the Duvalier regime, that Morisseau would write his second version of the Antigone story, *Wa Kreyon* (1978) (Bérard, 2008, p. 40).

Morisseau makes it very clear how *Antigòn* and *Wa Kreyon* differ from one another both in form and in purpose:

> I was conscious of the problem of Creole. I wanted *Antigone* to be a success, a literary success. It was performed in places in the world where the international papers could write about it and make Creole an international language of literature[...] I consider *King Creon* my most important play because [...] I was not so much interested in the literary officiality I wanted for Creole; I was more interested in the political situation in Haiti at the time I wrote *King Creon* [...] People say that Duvalier did what Creon did. But he would have done that even if I hadn't written *Antigone*. So when I wrote *King Creon*, I really took Duvalier as a model for the character. In *King Creon*, I depicted Duvalier as a crazy guy, publicly. (Morisseau-Leroy, 1992, pp. 669-670)

In this regard, Morisseau's objectives for *Antigòn* were certainly successful. It was performed in cities like Paris, New York City, Miami, Chicago, Boston, and countries like Jamaica and Ghana (where it was also translated and performed in English) (Airey, 2008, p. 65). *Antigòn* would give a voice and a sense of agency to those who were underrepresented in their own national dialogue, and would inspire other nations to seek out their own re-telling of the Antigone story. Almost three decades after *Antigòn* was first debuted in Port-au-Prince, the *Sosyete Koukouy* revived performances of Morisseau's chef d'oeuvre to much acclaim and it is still referred to as one of the most influential works to come out of the French Caribbean. Because he dedicated his life to proving the range and capability of written Kreyòl (even at

**See James Gibbs' "Antigone and her African Sisters: West African Versions of a Greek Original", *Classics in Post-Colonial Worlds* (2007) for a more in-depth discussion of Morisseau's contribution to Ghanian theatre.

the expense of his own safety), the foundation was laid for other language activists to carry on the torch of Felix Morisseau-Leroy's legacy.

2.3 Conclusion

Casanova claims that "impoverished" literary cultures bring major works of literature into their language system as a way of "enriching an underfunded literature" (Casanova, 2004, p. 134). In the realm of translation studies, these types of rewritings would be classified as adversarial translation, wherein "the translator endeavours to show that the creole can 'supersede and supplant the aesthetic exploit of the source text,' thereby validating it as a legitimate equal and peer"(Lang, 2000b, p. 17). I would argue that in this particular instance, however, adversarial translations need not be purely linguistic: there are customs, rituals, settings, even theologies that can be supplanted or reappropriated in the effort to renegotiate the power relations existing between two cultural systems. In this regard, Morisseau's "translation" was meant to serve as a challenge: it offered the proof that the Kreyòl language was capable of great artistic consciousness, as were Haiti's popular symbols and imagery. Therefore, it should not be seen as an attempt for Haiti to place herself closer to the center, but rather, to pull the center to the periphery through subversive rewriting. Such theories, in fact, drove translation theories such as *antropofagia*, founded by Brazilian writers wanting to nationalize Brazilian language and literature by "[gathering] existing resources in order to transmute them into cultural and literary capital" (Casanova, 2004, p. 288).

Although Morisseau-Leroy is widely regarded as the father of the Kreyòl movement in Haitian literature, there were other notable individuals of his generation who made contributions in revolutionizing the tone and "metaphoric possibilities" (Lang, 2004, pp. 135-136) of Kreyòl in literature, such as Franck Fouché (who around the same time that *Antigòn* debuted wrote a Kreyòl *Oedipus Rex*, and made many theoretical contributions on the nexus of vodou and performance), Claude Innocent, Paul Laraque, Georges Castera and Lyonel Trouillot, just to name a few. All hailing from the Occupation generation, these writer-activists were active in the Griot, *Indigéniste* and other "New" movements that sought

to discover and legitimize Haiti's non-European origins. Yet Ulrich Fleischmann points out that certain European tendencies hadn't been altogether dropped:

> Haiti had inherited the Enlightenment concept of the importance of literature, but, being a poor postcolonial society, it lacked the socioeconomic room to expand on this concept. In a case like this, the mechanisms of commercialization—publishing houses, book reviews, etc.—become pseudoinstitutions. The literary society is reduced to a small circle of writers and readers who know one another personally [. . .] (Fleischmann, 1997, p. 324).

Indeed, because the impetus behind such movements was to subvert the powerful political and cultural influence of French tradition, these intimate literary societies would be the key to keeping philosophical momentum alive. However, as Casanova notes, these early writer activists were also limited in how far they could carry such philosophies; because they were in the process of establishing the rules governing writing in their newly literary language (orthography, syntax, and so on) as well as recalling their oral traditions to be preserved in writing, they were, according to Casanova, "in the exclusive service of the new language, which is to say the new nation" (Casanova, 2004, pp. 274- 275). There was very little room to innovate outside of these fundamental nation-building acts. Furthermore, although the *Indigéniste* (inspired by Jean Price Mars) and later *noiriste*/Griot movements were the initial philosophical and aesthetic rallying point for many of these writers (Morisseau-Leroy included), the militant political direction that such heavily African-inspired movements would take under the reign of François "Papa Doc" Duvalier (himself a prominent intellectual of the Occupation generation) would cause many of these writers to seek out new inspiration, to try to find a compromise between their black African and white European ancestry: in short, to affirm, legitimize and promote their *creoleness*. As we will see next, with a firm sense of Haiti's linguistic and poetic character, this is what writers like Frankétienne would achieve with his numerous rewritings of *Dezafi*, first published in 1975. However, in spite of the limitations Morisseau's translation of *Antigòn* faced, its significance cannot be understated, as it provided an inventory of Haiti's indigenous vocabulary, themes and imagery. In so doing, he brought all these elements to the forefront of the national literary and poetic realms.

3 Innovation Through Renewal: Experiments in Literariness

> *For a long time we have been desperately searching. Leaves sensitive to the wind's caresses, we shudder with love. In the shadow, in the hollow of the bed, a single word slipped into our ear makes us quiver in our deepest fibers. A thrill shakes us to our roots. Between our toes, the grains of sand slip. Where is our life throbbing? The days come and go, following each other normally, sometimes in reverse. Torments. Tribulations. Dizzying change. We have been searching for a long time.*

(*Les Affres d'un Défi*, 1979, Frankétienne, Trans. Michael Dash)

The practice of self-translation (or auto-translation) has long been debated in literary and translation studies. Even though it is a common phenomenon, especially in academic fields where the transmission of information to a wider readership is essential to sharing knowledge, it is still "frowned upon" and not granted the same status as translation (or writing) proper (Baker & Saldanha, 2009, p. 17). In order for writers to be able to perform self-translations, it is generally understood that their mastery of both languages is strong enough that they can, in effect, create in either language. Therefore, in one sense, they are bilingual writers, and each language version of a text can be seen as an original, "invested with an authority that not even an 'approved' translation by diverse hands can match" (*ibid.*, p. 19). And yet, this explanation is simplistic, and denies the myriad contexts, constraints, intents and choices made within each "original." Indeed, Elizabeth Klosty Beaujour points out that unlike bilingual speakers, who due to the informality of speech acts can ease in and out

of languages in the same sentence, bi-/multi-lingual authors must deliberately *choose* their language of expression (*ibid.*, p. 18), and with each choice there are countless motivations. In other words, it is not so much a question of *how* two languages relate to each other, so much as "*why* do some writers repeat in a second language what has already been said in their previous work?" (*ibid.*).

The implications of language choice are especially relevant to discussions on self-translation in postcolonial societies, such as Haiti, where, as we have seen, heteroglossia is often fraught with implicit social, economic, and racial issues. As discussed earlier, the choice to write (or not write) in the colonial language has traditionally defined how widespread one's work will be distributed, as well as to whom the work is directed. Great strides were taken in an attempt to level the playing field, and in order to elevate the status of minority languages in the postcolonial context this must necessarily be done at the expense of the colonial language which has politically, economically and socially reigned. Thus, a binary arose out of this renegotiation process, a clear-cut line dividing the "colonizer" (the languages, rituals, culture and anything else associated with the West) and the "colonized" (the languages, rituals, culture and anything else that is seen as being authentic to the postcolonial society, especially if they are distinct from the West).

Yet this oppositional writing, while ideologically compelling, promotes insularity, and furthermore, doesn't necessarily reflect the reality of the lived experiences "on the ground." On this issue, Paul Bandia writes,

> A close reading of the works of these writers reveals the superficiality and reductionism in systematically assuming that topics pertaining to postcoloniality automatically imply resistance or opposition to an external hegemonic force. These writers follow Frantz Fanon (1966, 1967), who had pointed out much earlier that the knee-jerk opposition of the colonizer and the colonized obscures or overlooks the machinations of internal oppression within the colonies. (Bandia, 2010, p. 169)

Bandia gives examples of texts by writers from Cameroon, Congo, and Nigeria that indicate a shift away from the postcolonial struggle of independence and autonomy (which has traditionally presented Africa as continually in resistance to or opposing the West), and show instead themes that address the everyday struggles of their respective societies (*ibid.*, p. 170).

However, these works are still capable of demonstrating strong resistance in an attempt to assert identity, remaining deeply critical of African society, and the failures of democratization, and present the author's experience within their society. In effect, the critical nature of these works show that they aren't so much anticolonial, as we have seen in Haitian literature of the first half of the twentieth century, as they are anti-establishment (*ibid.*, p. 171), thereby signaling a new interest in pointing out internal structures of oppression and corruption.

As the poetics of a national literature continued to develop in Haiti into the second half of the twentieth century, Haitian writers began to shift their focus away from the external forces that, to them, stood in opposition to "Haitianness," and instead turned a more critical eye onto events within the country's borders. The politics of Duvalierism in many ways exemplified the damaging byproducts of such a dichotomous relationship between colonizer and colonized. Prior to his political career, François Duvalier was a prominent intellectual within the *noiriste* Griot movement, a group that philosophically and culturally aligned Haiti with its African origins. While many Haitian writers, artists, and intellectuals also ascribed to the tenets of *noiriste* ideology, the extremes of Duvalier's philosophies politically surpassed anything that many of his contemporaries had ever envisioned for their country. Duvalierism, therefore, gave Haitian authors reason for introspection, and reason to redefine Haitian creativity beyond the colonizer/colonized rhetoric that had previously characterized the nascent national literary culture. Haitian scholars such as Michael Dash effectively argue that "the many mutations provoked by the Duvalierist system led the way to a crisis in the representation of the Haitian reality, which was translated as troubles with the legibility of the surrounding space" (Lucas & Mitsch, 2004, p. 56). Likewise, Yannick Lahens remarks a sudden rupture from the ideological literary movements pre-dating Duvalier, and those of the second half of the twentieth century (*ibid.*). These ideological ruptures are twofold; writers in the diaspora, as we will later see, had to negotiate the complex identity issues that not only come with their inherited postcolonial Haitian identity, but also explore their complex Haitian identity within the context of being a minority in a foreign country/culture. The implications of this exploration will be discussed in Chapter 4. Here, I would like instead to focus on the second "rupture," looking at how Duvalierism impacted Haitian literary

expression *within* the country, and how these philosophical shifts can be understood within the greater framework of an evolving and expanding Haitian literary system.

As Suzanne Crosta writes, when the ethnologically-inspired cultural movements of the first half of the century were appropriated by Duvalier and used to support his campaigns of tyranny and terrorism, "the novel tradition responded in kind" (Crosta, 2003, p. 193). Of all the authors who remained inside Haiti during the Duvalier era, Frankétienne emerged as one of the most remarkable and prolific by far, with over 30 published works since 1964. A modern Renaissance man, Frankétienne is an author, physicist, painter, poet and playwright. Although his fair-skinned appearance, education and academic profession certainly could have afforded him the opportunity to flee governmental oppression in Haiti—as did many of his contemporaries—Jean Jonassaint explains, he is in the truest sense "a 'Haitian writer,' obstinately attached to his country [. . .]"

> Yesterday, seismograph of the much too long Duvalierist nightmare, now, interpreter of the never-ending transition toward democracy in which the country is sinking, "each of his great works is deeply rooted in Haitian contemporary history, and each of them, despite Frankétienne's will to remain primarily an artist, bears witness to a moment of the *national consciousness*." (Jonassaint, 2004, p. 143)

His work, spanning drama, novels, paintings, and essays, shows universal understanding of his country's plight, and exhibits a distinctive philosophy influenced by language, culture, and science. He is especially heralded by fellow Caribbean writers Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphäel Confiant (who are also contributing authors of the Creolist manifesto *Éloge de la créolité*), as embodying the spirit of the Créolité movement: "[C'est] en 1975 avec la publication du premier roman en créole haïtien, Dézafi, que la littérature créole [. . .] va trouver ses lettres de noblesse" (Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1991, p. 173). More telling of his role in inspiring Creolist movement is that his name (spelled Frankétyèn) appears on the manifesto's dedication page alongside those of Aimé Césaire and Edouard Glissant.

And yet, despite the movements his legacy has inspired, Frankétienne is reluctant to align himself with any organized ideology, be it political, ethnological, or cultural. A former colleague of the *Indigénistes* and Marxists, Frankétienne's early intellectual career mirrored that of many of his Haitian contemporaries. While in the École Nationale des Hautes Études

Internationales in the early 60s, he first began experimenting with French poetry. Inspired by earlier Haitian authors—in addition to foreign writers—his distinct poetic sensibility (one that will be discussed later in greater detail) developed into the 70s and he began writing novels (again, in French). However, as political oppression and the suffering of his compatriots increased under Duvalier's *noiriste* dictatorship, so too did his awareness of the issues of language, identity, and political writing, and he began his life-long pursuit of producing texts in Kreyòl. Rachel Douglas points out, however, that the issue of Frankétienne's socially engaged writing is, in true Frankétienne form, not easily classified among the ranks of other "engaged" writers. She refers to Confiant, who explains that while some will read the denunciation of the corrupt and oppressive regimes (such as those of the Duvaliers) into his works—as one would expect of a so-called "engaged" writer—Frankétienne himself never openly states anything against specific governments or political figures in his work. In fact, Frankétienne has gone so far as to criticize some of his more conventionally "engaged" peers, calling Jacques Stéphen Alexis's œuvre, for example, "un engagement de boy-scout" (Douglas, 2009, p. 47).

Instead, Frankétienne, along with his compatriots Jean-Claude Fignolé and René Philocète, sought to "fight against political hegemonic discourses and practices, encourage creativity and a renewal of language" and engage the reader through a post-modernist philosophical and literary aesthetic called Spiralism (Crosta, 2003, p. 194). Therefore, just as the 1940s marked the first real breakthrough in establishing a patently Haitian literary tradition, it is during the tumultuous period of the 60s and 70s where we will witness a new course in Haitian letters, namely through experimentations in literariness as seen through Frankétienne's career of Spiralist writing and rewriting.

3.1 Frankétienne's *Dézafi* (1975), *Les Affres d'un défi* (1979), and *Dezafi* (2002)

The designated value of literariness on a given text is "established in terms of a given cultural system, and never in isolation" (Toury, 1999, p. 166). In this regard, the internal and

external markers of the literariness of Frankétienne's first Kreyòl novel, *Dezafi*[*], present a complex web that account for the political, cultural, linguistic, and poetic systems in Haiti; and this doesn't yet consider the artist's own elusive philosophies, which further serve to influence the works' evolving literariness. Indeed, because of Frankétienne's truly unique writing process, his experimentation with literariness can be seen in two ways: first, he introduces radical poetic and linguistic devices to the still developing Haitian literary system, thereby bringing about innovation, introspection and cultural solidarity in the face of an increasingly authoritarian and hostile environment in the country's borders; secondly, as a result of his tendency to avoid equivalence, choosing instead to renew and reinforce his works through rewriting (thanks to the philosophies that drive his practice of perpetual creation) his French "translations"[†] of his Kreyòl texts serve as fully functional literary works in their own right, often surpassing the "original" text's successes on the international literary market. It is for these reasons that *Dezafi* serves as a compelling study in tracing the continued *littérisation* of Haitian literature.

Dézafi[1] (1975) is an undeniably monumental work in the Haitian literary canon, and indeed, in the Caribbean canon as well. While Félix Morisseau-Leroy's *Antigòn* proved that Kreyòl was a vehicle capable of telling the stories of antiquity as well as of the modern day, *Dézafi*[1] showed that Kreyòl needn't be constrained to oral or performative genres. Although *Dézafi*[1] takes a more traditionally Western literary form (the novel), it also clearly attempts "to forge a quintessentially Creole literary language around Haitian folk motifs" (Lang, 1997, p. 44). As a result, there is a tension in Frankétienne's text between incorporating the formal elements inherent in his chosen medium, and the organic and variable aspects that characterize much of Haitian popular culture. This seemingly contradictory approach is, in fact, characteristic of Frankétienne's writing as a whole, and has permitted him to attract a dedicated following. Haitian-American author Edwidge Danticat has said of Frankétienne: "His work can speak to the most intellectual person in the society as well as the most humble [. . .] It's a very generous kind of genius he has, one I can't imagine Haitian literature ever

[*]I shall employ *Dezafi* to denote the collection of works as a whole. When necessary, I will also employ the same method as Rachel Douglas of differentiating between the 1975 publication of *Dézafi* and the 2002 publication *Dezafi* by adding 1 or 2 in brackets, indicating the order of their writing.

[†]For these are not truly "translations," as I will discuss later.

existing without" (Archibold, 2011, n.p.). His writing also experiments with the balance between imagery and themes coming from Haiti's traditional culture and the structure and laws driving the natural and physical sciences. This delicate balance between seemingly at-odds elements is precisely what makes Frankétiene's work so innovative, and it is largely inspired by the post-modern philosophies exemplified through his scientific and aesthetic notion of Spiralism, which guides his practice of multiple rewritings.

3.1.1 Rewriting, Spiralism, and Cannibalism

Frankétienne's reputation as one of Haiti's most influential writers largely stems from his willingness to experiment with the form and practice of literature, as well as with the relationship between science and art, innovations that are most recognizable through his practice of rewriting his past works. In many ways, that Frankétienne revives his texts, bringing them to life again, is indicative of major shifts in post-colonial literary criticism. Therefore, I shall begin by outlining the theories that assist in the literary criticism of Frankétienne's work, and that illuminate his dedication to the renewal of Haitian literature.

Rewriting

The rewriting of texts can generally be understood within the framework of hypertextuality. In his book *Palimpsestes*, Gérard Genette defines hypertextuality as : "toute relation unissant un texte B (que j'appellerai *hypertexte*) à un texte antérieur A (que j'appellerai, bien sûr, *hypotexte*) sur lequel il se greffe d'une manière qui n'est pas celle du commentaire" (Douglas, 2009, p. 5). This broad definition therefore accounts for many types of intertextual relationships. Indeed, the term "rewriting" itself has been employed for different meanings and uses in literary scholarship. It can often be used to indicate (interlingual) translation, but it need not necessarily be bound by interlingual and intercultural transmission. For example, parody, pastiche, censorship and even transferring stories between genres (such as transferring oral narratives to written form, or writing a novel based on a play) are all manners of rewriting that don't necessarily transcend linguistic or cultural barriers. Through the process of hypertextual writing, texts are transformed from hypo- to hypertext by processes

of self-expurgation, excision and/or reduction, and, most notably in the case of Frankétienne, through amplification, a point I will revisit a bit later (G. Allen, 2000, p. 105).

It is worth pointing out that the phenomenon of rewriting is not new to Caribbean authors, as increasingly over the past century, "deliberate rewriting has become a multifunctional tool, and a double-edged axe that both manifests and protests globalisation" (Coste, 2004, n.p.). And while rewriting is present in some form in nearly every author's creative process, writers in the Caribbean have exhibited a "near-obsessive" interest in rewriting with the end of shaping and reshaping "the genesis of the most important Caribbean texts" (Douglas, 2009, p. 1). Of the most notable examples: Aimé Césaire rewrote Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in *Une tempête, d'après la tempête de Shakespeare pour un théâtre nègre*; Derek Walcott rewrote Homer in an epic poem entitled *Omeros* as well as in a stage production of *The Odyssey*; Maryse Condé rewrote Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* in her *Migration de coeurs*; and, as we saw earlier in Chapter 2, Felix Morisseau-Leroy's *Antigòn* can be counted among the many instances of interlingual and intercultural rewriting in the Caribbean, all of these with the end result of, as we have seen, establishing a "high" literary tradition in otherwise literarily disinherited countries.

What is less common, although still somewhat prevalent in the tradition of rewriting in the Caribbean, is autographic rewriting, or the rewriting of one's own previously written texts. In her study on Frankétienne's rewritings, Rachel Douglas notes that Genette is one of the few theorists who discusses *auto-hypertextualité*, or the practice of rewriting one's own work. Aimé Césaire, C.L.R. James, Edouard Glissant, Derek Walcott, Kamau Brathwaite, and Gérard Étienne have all revisited their own texts at one point or another. Perhaps unsurprisingly, other Haitian authors have participated in this practice as well; Dany Laferrière has rewritten *Cette grenade dans la main du jeune nègre est-elle une arme ou un fruit*, *Le Goût des jeunes filles*, and *La chair du maître*. One of the characteristics of Laferrière's practice of rewriting, Douglas remarks, is his tendency to alter the content of the hypotext (earlier version of the text) by introducing new character perspectives, adding scenes, and even modifying the primary focus or setting of the text. In comparing the autographic hyper- and hypotexts, the reader is therefore witness to the writer's particular

creative process throughout the span of their careers.

What is interesting about Frankétienne's motivations for rewriting his own works is that he does so with the vision of keeping his works in a perpetual state of being rewritten, breaking away from the focus of traditional literary criticism, which is by and large based on the linearity and anteriority that is often associated with hypertextual study of rewritings. In fact, Frankétienne's method is not readily classified within the theories or methods of most critics, including Genette's, as Frankétienne's work cannot be constrained by many of the categories and classifications they offer. Furthermore, as we will see later, the cultural and political context of rewriting is especially relevant to Frankétienne's work, something Douglas argues that dominant Genettian and *critique génétique*-based theories more or less ignore.

Spiralism

Any conversation about Frankétienne's oeuvre must necessarily consider his concept of Spiralism. Reflecting the repeated cycles of corruption, violence, poverty, and emigration, many of Frankétienne's principles in his writing and paintings revolve around central themes of transformation, fragmentation, and revival (Jonassaint, 2004), all of which can be seen as extensions of his philosophical notion (and literary practice) of Spiralism. For reasons I will elaborate upon later, Frankétienne is careful to only vaguely define the tenets of Spiralism as a movement. In his interview with Mohamed Taleb-Khyar, Frankétienne contextualizes this concept in scientific terms: the spiral appears in geometry, in galaxy structures, nebulae and stars, as well as in natural life forms on Earth ranging from the macro- to the microscopic scale. All of these examples are dynamic, and cannot be contained within a linear motion, something he likens to "the sterility of nothingness" (Taleb-Khyar, 1992, p. 389). However, neither is this movement circular, for a circle is closed and follows its path until it ends where it begins (which, to Frankétienne, symbolizes the stillness of death). Therefore, the universe is miraculously united by this motion of the spiral, of moving "from the simple to the complex", defining "the perpetual movement of life and of all evolving things" (*ibid.*, p. 390). This certainly plays a role in Frankétienne's perceptions of time and history supposedly

repeating itself; although we are continually moving onward and upward in the universe, it doesn't necessarily imply progress or movement towards the better. In the instance of Haiti, for example, the persistent cycles of poverty, oppression and corruption have gone beyond an unfortunate coincidence to becoming an accepted fact of life.

So what does this mean when applied to art, or more specifically, to Frankétienne's writing? Spiralism embodies the aesthetics of chaos, of perpetual motion. As such, Spiralist literature rejects linearity in its portrayal of reality, and instead espouses:

> [...] une méthod d'approche pour essayer de saisir la réalité qui est toujours en mouvement. Le problème fondamental de l'artiste est celui-ci: essayer de capter une réalité, transmettre cette réalité, tout en gardant les lignes de force, de manière que ce réel transmis sur le plan littéraire ne soit pas une chose figée, une chose morte. (Cited in Kauss, 2007, n.p.)

This literary life force is driven by what Frankétienne calls *écriture quantique*. In *écriture quantique*, the author "strives to apply to his own language the explosive vigor, dynamism of structure and unexpected merging of words" in a way that recalls trends in modern physics (Douglas, 2009, p. 145). As one would imagine, quantic writing employs words as the quanta of the literary work, thereby bestowing an almost lifelike quality to the word itself. Indeed, Glover characterizes this Spiralist way of viewing words and writing as insistently seeking "to narrow the divide between the written and the lived—to identify 'the exact moment when a single word might be worth more than a field of wheat[‡]' " (Glover, 2010, p. xii). Frankétienne further affirms this, saying in an interview: "At the beginning was the Word, i.e. the vibration, the original pole of the spiral, the movement of which is everlasting in the dialectical unity of spirit and matter, in the dynamic of conscience and energy [...]" (Taleb-Khyar, 1992, p. 390). In viewing words as the source of energy in his writing, Frankétienne is able to harness his notion of the spiral through repeated rewritings of his texts. The result of this is an accumulation and amplification of thematic elements, which allows him to emphasize certain themes or ideas, and transfer "energy" from one text to its next incarnation by carefully emphasizing certain words, sounds, themes, and imagery. The importance of words in Caribbean Spiralist works is in many ways tied to the significance of oral tradition. Kaimia

[‡]A phrase originating from Frankétienne's first Spiralist œuvre, *Ultravocal* (1972).

Glover remarks that: "The very idea of the spiral recalls the foundations of the Caribbean oral tradition, according to which stories unfold cumulatively or cyclically; are relatively unconcerned with any purely narrative structure or horizontal, linear development; and are subject invariably to the frequent and spontaneous interventions of the public" (Glover, 2010, p. viii).

Glover also summarizes the impact of Spiralism on the Caribbean literary tradition, saying "the spiral effectively allegorizes the tension between the insular and the global at work in their fiction. It offers a path via which [its authors] have been able to universalize their creative perspective without literally or figuratively abandoning the particular space of their island" (*ibid.*, p. ix). In this regard, we will see next how Frankétienne's Spiralism in many ways reflects innovative post-colonial translation theories occurring outside of Haiti's borders.

Anthropophagy

Although, for the reasons mentioned above, translation theories that search for equivalence are not entirely relevant when discussing the creative method of Frankétienne, discussions involving the translative nature of the texts can perhaps be more adequately informed by more recent, liberating translation practices that do not replicate traditional "source"/"target" models. As we saw in Chapter 2, the tendency to continue to follow Western mores has presented many obstacles to Haitian artists and intellectuals attempting to break free of ongoing mental colonialism. However, this struggle was (and is) not limited to Haiti; indeed, all post-colonial societies have grappled to some extent with the residual effects of colonialism and its effect on politics, economics, and of course, culture. This is why, for example, we see so many ethnonationalist philosophies and manifestos developing out of post-colonial societies during the first half of the twentieth century. It was under these circumstances that in 1928 the Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade published the *Manifesto Antropófago* [*Cannibal Manifesto*]. The manifesto was so named in reference to native rituals carried out in pre-Columbian Brazil, wherein natives fed on the blood of an animal—or sometimes human—victim as a means of absorbing their strength. Likewise, the purpose of the manifesto

was to encourage Brazilians not to reject influence from their colonial history, but to absorb or appropriate it within their own native framework[§].

Since then, "*Antropofagia* has developed into a very specific experimentalism, a poetics of translation, an ideological operation as well as a critical discourse theorizing the relation between Brazil and external influences, increasingly moving away from essentialist confrontations towards a bilateral appropriation of sources and the contamination of colonial/hegemonic univocality" (Vieira, 1999, p. 95). Coinciding with Frankétienne's own artistic explorations, the 1960s and 1970s saw a renewed interest in theories revolving around *Antropofagia*, with Haroldo de Campos emerging as one of the most influential figures of this discourse. De Campos notably expanded upon the philosophies informing Andrade's thesis with regards to translation and transcreation. For de Campos, "*Antropofagia* and its application to translation [...] unsettles the primacy of origin, recast both as donor and receiver of forms, and advances the role of the receiver as a giver in its own right, further pluralizing (in)definitely" (*ibid.*). Translation is therefore a parallel creation to the "source" text, its own original that, while certainly strengthened by the source, in no way owes its allegiance to it, and the act of translating goes from being a unidirectional enterprise to a reciprocal transcultural act. Furthermore, on the political dimension, de Campos' work on *Autopofagia* and nationalism likewise denounces the "linear" course of history, wherein one looks back to seek the origin of a national logos. Instead, issues of national identity, especially in the shadow of the post-colonial era, are viewed as a rupture, as "the non-origin" (*ibid.*, p. 104).

This brings us to another important distinction in de Campos' theories on translation. Where translation is "the production of difference in sameness" (*ibid.*, p. 110), transcreation, according to de Campos, "is not to try to reproduce the original's form understood as a sound pattern, but to appropriate the translator's contemporaries' best poetry, to use the local existing tradition" (*ibid.*, p. 111). In effect, transcreation is re-creation, and the trans-/re-created work is viewed as an original in its own right. Interestingly, we have heard

[§]A now famous phrase from the manifesto illustrating this point is "Tupi, or not Tupi", a play on words that refers to the Tupì people, who were known for their ritualistic cannibalism, as well as the type of cultural/literary "cannibalizing" of Shakespeare through the famous line from *Hamlet*, "To be or not to be."

similar opinions on the nature of hypertextual writings through Frankétienne's own spiralist philosophy. And yet, while de Campos and other Caribbean intellectuals subscribing to such radical (at the time) philosophies practiced their own form of rewriting, their rewritings were meant to cannibalize the dominant Western literary traditions, to serve as a form of literary criticism wherein they subvert the dominant tendencies in order to assert their own strength. By "cannibalizing" foreign works with great symbolic capitol, the *Antropofagists* are absorbing the foreign work's strength, "to take from the marrow and protein to fortify and renew his own natural energies" (de Campos cited in Vieira, 1999, p. 103). Frankétienne, however, is an *autopofagist*—with each rewriting, he is fortifying, revitalizing, and renewing himself.

3.1.2 Reading Across The *Dezafi* Rewritings

Dézafi[1] holds the distinction of being the first novel to be written in Haitian Kreyòl. As such, it challenged the criticisms of Kreyòl's literary capabilities, and further proved that Kreyòl—as well as Haiti's popular culture—was capable of abstract and highly literary expression. It is a highly important work to the modern Haitian literary scene, but also made an impact on the global literary market as well. As a result, its subsequent versions in both French and Kreyòl must be analyzed in a context appropriate to its emergence(s) in the literary system.

As mentioned earlier, Frankétienne's career represents a shift in Haitian literary consciousness; instead of exclusively looking to the past to reclaim a marginalized cultural and linguistic patrimony, he also sought inspiration from modern writers from beyond Haiti's borders[¶]. George Lang makes the argument that such experimental ruptures from basilectal realism "is inevitable in any modern literary system, one that must be in some sense competitive with world literature as a whole" (Lang, 1997, p. 44). However, Jonassaint makes the distinction between the modernist turn in some literary systems and that of Frankétienne's: "The political or historical bias is the determining factor by which [Franké-

[¶]Frankétienne claims to love James Joyce, since *Finnegan's Wake* "was like a crazy book, just like I write crazy books" (Archibold, 2011, n.p.)

tienne's] poetics are distinct from other French avant-garde aesthetic experiences such as Surrealism or the *nouveau roman*" (Jonassaint, 2004, p. 152). Laurent Dubois pushes this even further, arguing: "[Spiralist writing] involve[s] intensive and layered formal experiments, efforts to showcase untranslatability of symbols and narratives, not to mention the haunting evocation of nightmarish landscapes of layered suffering and violence. The Spiralists make the European surrealists and contemporary experimental French writers look like a bunch of amateurs" (Dubois, 2012, p. 177). What Frankétienne succeeded in doing, then, was to take the emerging Kreyòl literary art (at the time, mostly constrained to poetry and theatre) and push its capabilities even further by introducing it to the novel genre, the most privileged medium on the world market. But it is Frankétienne's fragmented and visionary style that pushes not just the limits of representation of Haitian poetics—after all, Frankétienne was "nourished" on Haitian theatre, poetry and popular narratives (Jonassaint, 2008, p. 117)—but also of the novel genre full stop.

Although Frankétienne has his own philosophies motivating his rewriting process, Casanova notes that dual language writers are not uncommon in emerging literary systems: "When a peripheral language has acquired at least some resources of its own, one sees the emergence [. . .] of literary artists who set themselves the task of producing a dual body of work, maintaining a complex and painfully difficult position between two languages in the process" (Casanova, 2004, p. 26). Therefore, like the Madagascan poet Jean Joseph Rabearivelo, who maintained dual bodies of text in both French and Malagasy (*ibid.*, p. 266), Frankétienne creates a new style of writing by setting himself in opposition to nationalist and French assimilationist writing, both thematically and linguistically. We know that Frankétienne shunned the idea of writing in Kreyòl in the capacity of an "engaged" writer, so for him, creation in Kreyòl wasn't necessarily to publicly advocate for Kreyòl or the popular motifs and oral styles often associated with Kreyòl writing. However, by introducing the first novel in Haitian Kreyòl, he also can't be completely ignorant to the implications this serves in the Haitian literary system either (namely that this is a momentous event in the Haitian literary system, and yet only a minority of people in the country will be able to appreciate it), nor can we ignore the fact that his works simply *are* steeped in orality and

Haiti's storytelling tradition. Furthermore, Frankétienne wouldn't have been blind to the contradictions or implications of recreating his text(s) in French (both the language of the colonizer and the ticket to a wider readership), nor of introducing the story once again in Kreyòl decades later. Therefore, *Dezafi* stands at the heart of one of many paradoxes in Frankétienne's literary career.

Kaimia Glover and Rachel Douglas both remark that one of the most significant characteristics of Frankétienne's creative modus operandi is his tendency to *show* rather than tell (Glover, 2010) (Douglas, 2012). In order to untangle the social, political, and literary complexities of these particular rewritings, let us first begin by examining what these stories show. *Dezafi* is about the plight of the oppressed masses who are controlled by a small, but vicious ruling group. The "oppressors" in all three works are represented in the figures of Saintil, a powerful vodou sorcerer, Zofer, a henchman (although the role he plays is more like that of the plantation slave driver), and Sultana, the daughter—and mistress—of Saintil. Saintil created the zombies by reviving them from their fresh graves, and with the help of Zofer and Sultana, has full control of the territory which he manages with his herd of zombi laborers. Sultana, who has fallen in love with Colondis, one of the zombis, gives him salt, which in accordance with vodou belief restores his memory and agency. Colondis, ignoring Sultana's pleas, then uses salt to liberate the other zombi captives, and together they revolt. Once Saintil is found, he is given to the masses to be judged. Once determined guilty, he is quite literally ripped apart by the angry mob, and the liberated set off to free other oppressed people across the countryside.

Thematically, *Dezafi* tells the universal story of abuse and oppression through the metaphor of zombification, and with the assistance of other vodou and Haitian folkloric elements. As we saw earlier, zombification holds many strong historical and political associations dating back to the slave trade, colonialism and the US Occupation in the Haitian collective imagination. However, Dubois remarks that the thematic use of zombis in Haitian literature has further evolved to serve as a "universal referent for the loss of control in industrial and postindustrial worlds" (Dubois, 2012, p. 182). In the context of 1970s Haiti, it is not difficult to once again notice parallels between the silenced and exploited zombies

in *Dezafi* and the Haitian people under the Duvalierist government. To publish *Dézafi*[1] and *Les Affres d'un Défi* when he did was, to say the least, a courageous act, and through a close examination of his rewritings of this revolutionary text, his motivations to write under such dire circumstances come to light. Yet, because Frankétienne rewrote this story a third time—nearly 30 years after *Dézafi*[1] was first published, and 16 years after the Duvalier regime officially came to a close—we are able to make certain observations about Frankétienne's motivations for writing *how* he did *when* he did, as well as the legacy he hoped to leave for Haiti's literary space.

In order to understand how Frankétienne's story has evolved with time, let us first look at the linguistic considerations of these three publications. Although *Les Affres d'un Défi* has often been called a "translation" of the 1975 novel, *Dézafi*[1], this would play a great disservice to Frankétienne's artistic process, as well as ignore the latest Kreyòl incarnation of the works. And yet, as Rachel Douglas points out: "To say that the relationship between *Dézafi* and *Les Affres* is not as identical as that of an equivalent translation is not to deny that there exists a close relationship between them" (Douglas, 2009, p. 32). Indeed, Raphaël Confiant calls *Les Affres* a "traduction-recréation" which was written "à partir du texte créole, un nouveau texte français qui soit à la hauteur du projet stylistique et narratif de l'auteur" (cited in Douglas, 2009, p. 34). The French version more than met the author's artistic standards; although *Dézafi*[1] clearly made a big impact on the Caribbean literary world, it is through *Les Affres d'un Défi* that the *Dezafi* rewritings (and Frankétienne, by extension) achieved his greatest international recognition. Most scholarship on *Dezafi* in fact focuses on *Les Affres* to the exclusion of the Kreyòl texts, and George Lang remarks: "The delay before *Les Affres d'un défi* appeared in fact led many to imagine, according to Maximilien Laroche, that the author had taken an irreversible turn to creole leaving French forever behind, far from the fact" (Lang, 2000a, p. 263). Indeed, as I will later discuss, the transformations wrought on the French version not only amplify the thematic and stylistic devices presented in *Dézafi*[1], but also reveal, as Raoul Granqvist states, "a frantic yearning to be understood and an equally strong desire to be taken notice of" (cited in Douglas, 2009, p. 34). While Frankétienne has dedicated much of his career to building Kreyòl's literary

capital, his choice to rewrite his pivotal work only a few years later in French, a decidedly more universal language than Kreyòl, is telling of his desire to reach a wider readership. This is paratextually supported by *Les Affres*' comprehensive glossary, with over 125 entries. Yet, while *Les Affres* could be seen as the "painful" submission that dual language writers must accept in order to attract a wider readership, I argue that it is, in fact, only the intermediary step that Frankétienne must take in order to complete his spiral motion. To date, the most recent version of the text—*Dezafi*[2]—is, once again, in Kreyòl, not French. Furthermore, as we will see next, because of Frankétienne's particular style of rewriting (notably through quantitative augmentation and accumulations), *Dezafi*[2] emerges as the definitive autophagic product, fortified and enriched by the strengths of its predecessors.

Having established the root of the story, as well as the linguistic and stylistic choices of the author, we can now turn our attention to the specific ways in which these texts grow and expand upon each other, giving insight into Frankétienne's artistic purpose.

Quantitative Augmentation and Accumulation

The first notable difference between *Dézafi*[1] and *Les Affres d'un Défi* is quantitative augmentation. Before even looking at the content, it is immediately clear that *Les Affres d'un Défi* is significantly longer than its predecessor, *Dézafi*[1]. Some passages are so expanded that for every Creole word in *Dézafi*[1], an entire sentence is added in French in *Les Affres*. This can in part be attributed to the inherent differences between languages. French is known for its verbosity, and it can often take much longer expressions in French in order to convey the same idea in Kreyòl. Indeed, Raphäel Confiant wrote that with regards to French and Creoles, "Le créole n'a pas de niveau descriptif: il manque d'adjectifs permettant de décrire un paysage. On est également obligé d'avoir recours à des proverbes et à des formules idiomatiques pour donner une tonalité authentique de la langue" (cited in Douglas, 2009, p. 38). Yet, these differences on the linguistic level do not entirely explain the drastic growth that occurred between *Dézafi*[1] and *Les Affres*. Douglas argues that when comparing corresponding passages, it becomes clear that Frankétienne subjects *Dézafi*[1] to a process of thematic and stylistic amplification, and in so doing, it becomes even

more difficult to determine the amplified elements from the interlinguistic and intercultural translation (Douglas, 2009, p. 38). However, Frankétienne's quantitative augmentation along key accumulated themes is carried from *Dézafi*[1], through *Les Affres d'un Défi* and into *Dezafi*[2] as well, which only reinforces the idea that the reason for the drastic increase in text is not inherent in the language, but in fact is a deliberate act on the part of Frankétienne.

Accumulations are also a significant aspect of Frankétienne's rewritings, fulfilling two functions: one aesthetic and the other thematic (Douglas, 2009). Thematically, repetitions and augmentations allow Frankétienne to call attention to the themes and symbols that he wishes to emphasize. Aesthetically, the accumulations give him an arena to exercise his aesthetic principles of Spiralism and quantic writing. The result of such accumulations is therefore "the creation of a new and different work through the processes of cannibalization, clarification, recapitulation, and hyperbolization [...]" (*ibid.*, p. 152). Repetition is a frequent occurrence in Frankétienne's (re)writing process. With each layer of writing, these themes take on new, and stronger meanings, and the reader familiar with the body of work will recognize the transformation of these key themes. As I have mentioned, *Dézafi*[1], written under the Duvalier dictatorship, serves as a thinly veiled metaphor for the specific political and historical context of Haiti during this period. The themes of oppression—with zombification being one of the most prominent among them—are accumulated and intensified with each rewriting. So while *Dézafi*[1] certainly presents the reader with certain universal themes, it is through *Les Affres d'un Défi*, and later *Dezafi*[2], that the metaphor of oppression and corruption take its wider significance.

Beginning with *Les Affres d'un Défi*, the universality of these themes, Douglas remarks, is evident in the many glossary entries that feature prominently at the end of the text. In the glossary, Frankétienne enhances the parallels between zombification and slavery through his careful use of words in the entry for *zombi*:

> La victime, une fois réveillée [de son état de 'mort'], est giflée, cravachée et conduite chez son maître pour y subir une exploitation à vie [...] En effet, le zombi est une bête de somme que son maître exploite sans merci, le forçant à travailler dans ses champs, l'accablant de besogne, ne lui ménageant pas les coups de fouet ne le nourrissant que d'aliments insipides. (Cited in Douglas, 2009, p. 36)

Other words in the glossary, such as "asservi," "utilisé," and "main d'oeuvre gratuite," further emphasize the dehumanized, slave-like status of the zombis. The strong language used to describe the depraved zombified state therefore stands in even starker contrast to the way Frankétienne presents the solution (Douglas, 2009). Words like "réveil," "conscient," "transforme," "plein d'énergie," "brusque," and "détermination" are also repeatedly emphasized in the glossary, highlighting the role of active awareness and critical thinking as the way to combat the lethargy of zombification (*ibid.*).

Dezafi[2] further harnesses the momentum of accumulated themes from *Dézafi*[1] and *Les Affres d'un Défi*, and emphasizes them accordingly. Tying in with the importance of awareness is also that of memory and remembering. One example of how memory is accumulated and amplified can be seen through the addition of anaphoric sequences in *Dezafi*[2]:

memwa nou anfouye	*our memory is distraught*
memwa nou anfouraye	*our memory is ruined*
memwa nou fann pakanpak	*our memory is split through and through*
memwa nou defalke	*our memory is demolished*
memwa nou kraze miyètmoso	*our memory is broken into tiny pieces*
memwa nou fonn	*our memory is melting*
memwa nou vapore.	*our memory is evaporating.*
	(cited in Douglas, 2009, p. 58)

The repetition of 'memwa nou' ('*our memory*') here is especially effective at demonstrating how Spiralism confers energy from hypotext to hypertext. From this passage, the lack of autonomous thinking is repeatedly brought up, but presented in slightly different forms each time. Furthermore, in emphasizing *nou* through repetition, Frankétienne is introducing a new, encompassing narrative perspective, one that illuminates the thought processes of the formerly voiceless masses.

Along the same lines, in the process of amplification, one of the transformations produced is "transmotivization," or the "transformation of motivation in hypertexts" (G. Allen, 2000, p. 107). Transmotivization is an interesting phenomenon to witness within Frankétienne's œuvre, as with each subsequent rewriting, we are witness to the changes in personal and political influences on Frankétiene's writing context. In the *Dezafi* rewritings, the evolution

of Frankétienne's message can be witnessed through the transmotivization of his zombis with each revised version. In the hypotext, both Mae-Lyna Beaubrun and Rachel Douglas note that the zombis are characterized as being passive, resigned, mechanical, empty and unthinking, and most of all, as lacking unity (Beaubrun, 2002, p. 49), (Douglas, 2009, pp. 38-39).

With *Les Affres d'un Défi*, however, the zombi narrative using "nous"/"nou" begins to show more agency. Instead of being passive vessels, for the first time they exhibit *desire*, a longing for freedom and an end to their oppression. Beaubrun is careful to note that throughout *Dézafi*[1], the zombis wish for freedom from their enslaved state. However, she also notes that it isn't until nearly the end of the novel (page 222) that the zombis take charge and join together to fight against their oppressors in order to attain a common objective: their freedom (Beaubrun, 2002, p. 52). In contrast, she remarks that almost from the beginning of *Les Affres d'un Défi*, the voice of the zombis comes through the narrative of a "nous" that is on the brink of revolution:

> **Guerre à fond de nerfs surchauffés où mûrissent les fruits de la folie. Les cœurs trop sensibles ne se risquent pas dans le tourbillon de la violence / les faibles ne devraient pas s'engager / Choc éblouissant / Grimace des visages enlaidis par la surexcitation démoniaque / Dominant les hurlements et les trépignements de la foule en crise, nous abordons avec prudence les terrains piégés. [. . .] Par des étages de nuages gris, la tempête prépare un coup d'état dans le ramassage des vents au-dessus de la mer chauffée à blanc.**[‖] (Cited in Beaubrun, 2002, p. 53)

This passage clearly demonstrates the rebellion in the making, and the charged, energized language stands as a challenge to the previous representations of the lethargic, passive state of the zombis in *Dézafi*[1]. In *Les Affres d'un Défi*, the zombis are preparing for war, separating the weak of heart from the strong. The language is much more militant, and it is as though the energy from the surrounding storm clouds is transferred to writing itself.

By emphasizing the internal thoughts and feelings of the zombis, Frankétienne is also introducing the implied opposition to what stands against the narrating "nou"/"nous". Beverly

[‖]Text originally appeared in bold in *Les Affres d'un Défi*. Frankétienne's writing style is also characterized by the use of italicized or bold text in certain passages.

Ormerod explains that in Frankétienne's work (as well as in the work of other great Caribbean writers such as Edouard Glissant), the use of a faceless and nameless "we" is symbolically used to represent the peasant/proletariat voice. In *Les Affres d'un Défi* (and later, *Dezafi*[2]), where the parallels between the state of the zombis and those of Haiti's slaves can clearly be drawn, "*we* (sometimes uncertain in its own identity) is slowly enlarged to include other beings that are or have been exposed to an even greater suffering: fighting cocks betrayed and mutilated in the pit; zombies held in thrall by magic and violence; ancestors who were caught, branded, and 'zombified' by the crushing mechanisms of slavery" (Ormerod, 1994, p. 441). *They*, in the form of "malevolent outside agency" (*ibid.*) therefore stands as the default opposition to the oppressed *we*. Indeed, Ormerod remarks that for much of the novel, the *they* that stands in opposition to the *we* is largely anonymous, sometimes being characterized as "our enemies," and other times explicitly signifying Saintil and his supporters (*ibid.*, p. 442). Of course, the nature of *they* is intentionally never specified by Frankétienne, allowing the reader to recognize the parallels between the circumstances of the narrative *we* in the *Dezafi* rewritings and perhaps their own particular socio-political circumstances, leaving the reader to draw their own conclusions. To a Haitian reading *Les Affres d'un Défi* at the time it was published, *they* could represent the *tonton macoutes*, Duvalier informants and collaborators, and even the Duvaliers themselves. However, the language is intentionally vague enough that it is not fixed to any specific moment in time, and stands on its own as a universal message on tyranny and the exploitation of the weak throughout the world.

Through the accumulated themes and images of zombification from *Dézafi*[1] to *Les Affres*, it becomes clearer that consciousness, awareness, and awakening are the antithesis of the state of zombification, and through language shift, particularly by introducing a stronger presence of "nous" among the zombis, *Les Affres* becomes a call to action, a call for the awakening of the zombified masses. While Frankétienne avoids providing fixed solutions to the many problems he addresses, in the French and later Kreyòl rewritings of *Dezafi*, he does augment the original Kreyòl text by posing many open-ended questions to the zombi (and perhaps even the reader) that may lead them to that moment of awakening he has been building up to all along. Examples of these types of rhetorical questions are:

> "Comment faire sauter les verrous de la nuit, si les zombis n'ont jamais manifesté de tendance à rébellion?" (Cited in Douglas, 2009, p. 48)
>
> "Quels sont les véritables auteurs du crime?" (*ibid.*)
>
> "Qu'allons-nous tenter sans ailes et sans voix devant la nuit infranchissable?" (*ibid.*, p. 49)

Douglas argues that the implementation of such questioning "calls for a decision to be made so that the action undertaken can be successful and directed against the correct culprits" (*ibid.*, p. 48). Therefore, Frankétienne emphasizes in particular actions of resolution. For example:

> "Nous rassemblons nos connaissances guerrières." (Cited in Douglas, 2009, p. 49)
>
> "Nous recherchons le point d'impact et de complicité pour rehausser la fête initiatrice [...]. Nous continuons à marcher, cachés derrière notre visage, changeant de temps en temps d'ombre et de masque." (*ibid.*)
>
> "Il est indispensable que nous nous unissions aux paysans de la région pour suivre ensemble un seul chemin, celui de la liberté pour tous. [...] il est urgent que, les uns et les autres, nous formions un front uni pour écraser ce soir même la tête du serpent." (*ibid.*)

The new emphasis placed on planning, on awareness, and especially on action most clearly demonstrates the thematic shift between *Dézafi*[1] and *Les Affres d'un Défi*, and is later most apparent in *Dezafi*[2].

As with *Les Affres*, *Dezafi*[2] also exhibits amplification and accumulation along key themes. However, Douglas argues that while *Dezafi*[2] is unmistakably linked to its predecessors, *Dézafi*[1] and *Les Affres*, it is also divergent from both hypotexts, which she claims indicates that Frankétienne's method of rewriting has itself been transformed in the period between 1979 (his first demonstrated instance of rewriting with *Les Affres*) and when *Dezafi*[2] was published in 2002. As the most recent incarnation of the *Dezafi* rewritings, *Dezafi*[2] is the most highly charged thus far. Like *Les Affres d'un Défi*, adjectives, imagery and themes are amplified. Where the grey clouds in *Les Affres d'un Défi* symbolized the imminent upheaval, *Dezafi*[2] is replete with violent natural events: "explosyon" (explosions), "zèklè" (lightning), "vòlkan" (volcanoes), and "seizman" (earthquakes). There is also an

analogous intensifying in the theme of zombification, especially with regards to consciousness and action (see the anaphoric sequence of "memwa nou" mentioned earlier for one such example). Frankétienne also revives the "strings of insistent questions and imperatives" calling for *nou* to act (*ibid.*, p. 60).

Another amplified theme from *Dézafi*[1] to *Dezafi*[2] comes from the title itself; the cockfight. At the end of *Dézafi*[1], Frankétienne writes "Vouyaj-la long. Vouyaj-la ka diré pliziè rékòt ak anpil ralé-minnin-vini." ["*The journey is long. The journey could last several harvests with many false starts*"] (cited in Douglas, 2009, p. 56). Douglas notes, however, that these sentences are pleonastically amplified in *Dezafi*[2] with the additions of "Batay la panko fini" ["*The battle is not yet over*"] and "Nou fèk kare goumen." ["*We have only just begun*"] (*ibid.*, p. 57). Douglas believes this indicates that even in 2002, at the time of *Dézafi*'s second rewriting and over 15 years after "Baby Doc" Duvalier fled Haiti (thereby ending the tyranny of the Duvalier regime), the author believed that the "work" wasn't yet finished. This is further elaborated upon with the addition of "Dezafi pa fini" ["*The cockfight is not over*"], and "Dezafi p ap janm fini" ["The cockfight is never-ending"] (*ibid.*). Therefore, the message of *Dezafi*[2] is that the struggle against oppression is *still* continuing and the need to fight against it is just as important in 2002 as it was in 1975.

In summary, through his particular brand of innovative writing using modified repetitions and accumulated themes across multiple rewritings, Frankétienne shapes both the Kreyòl and French languages into a spiral-like matrix capable of renewing itself, thereby escaping the finite limitations of the closed circle, which he associates with sterility and death. Although *Dézafi*[1] is a story that is deeply rooted in Haitian political history and plays on themes of slavery and oppression that have long resided in the country's national consciousness, through Frankétienne's philosophy of Spiralism and his practice of rewriting, a comparative study of his rewritings over time allows us to draw out his nuanced commentary on the ineffectiveness of "wait-and-see" responses to oppression, as well as the power of awakening and revolution. Furthermore, his calculated addition of an inclusive narrative voice in the form of "nous"/"nou" alludes to a universal reality where the reader and the zombi "become one in their terror, their torment, and their mutual recognition of a shared foe" (Ormerod,

1994, p. 443).

3.1.3 Conclusion

At a time when most artists and intellectuals were forced to flee Haiti, Frankétienne was among the few who remained and continued to create. Yet, despite being contained within his national borders for decades, his literature managed to transcend national boundaries and offered insight into Haiti during one of the most secretive and dangerous political climates in the country's recent memory. Through his Spiralist rewritings, Frankètienne repeatedly affirms his artistic vision, one that is deeply "Haitian," but that also translates universal human experiences across languages and beyond geographic borders. The end result is the renewal of Haitian literature, as well as the development of new, highly literary mode of expression which called attention to the viability of Haitian literature on the world stage.

While Frankétienne perhaps did not set out to become internationally recognized, certain external factors helped influence his art, allowing him to emerge as one of the most prominent contemporary Haitian authors. Firstly, he is of the wave of artists immediately following the Occupation Generation, so while the works of these earlier artists were certainly formative in the development of his aesthetic, his artistic inspiration had developed beyond reactionary cultural nationalism; as a result, his themes speak to universal truths while still displaying a poetics that is rooted in Haiti's popular culture, "a quintessentially Creole *literary* language around Haitian folk motifs" [emphasis mine] (Lang, 1997, p. 44). I will return to the significance of his universality shortly. Secondly, his particular situation (living and writing in Duvalierist Haiti) helped shape his artistic process (one that imparts many layers of meaning and interpretation, in order to impede "the satisfaction of decoding or understanding" (Glover, 2010, p. 198)), and also granted his work a certain authority as speaking on behalf of those inside the country when the internal and external flow of information in the country were heavily monitored and censored.

By virtue of creating original, highly literary novels coming from inside Haiti, Frankétienne thus showed the promise of literariness in Haiti's cultural capital. On this point, though, it is important to note that his choice of the novel medium is what allowed him to make

such bold statements against tyranny and oppression while living under Duvalierist rule, and it further determined who his audience would be. In an interview, Frankétienne expressed frustration that so few of his countrymen were able to read *Dézafi*[1] that he turned his attention to creating Kreyòl theatre instead. Of this, Frankétienne said: "Dictators are mean but not necessarily stupid, so they knew I didn't have any readers. What really gave them a problem was when I started with plays" (Archibold, 2011, n.p.). We can thus conclude that the 1979 French version wasn't created in order to attract a larger Haitian readership (after all, Haitians capable of reading written Kreyòl at that time tended to be of the educated class, and those belonging to the educated classes were likely to know French, making a French version redundant), but to an audience outside of Haiti's borders; an audience willing to parse through a highly challenging, literary language and analyze it in a manner appropriate to its conception: in short, an audience familiar with experimental literature, an audience that is most likely to be found at international literary centers.

One could say, in this regard, that Frankétienne invites further marginalization within his own œuvre by creating in French at all, then. After all, in a global system in which French is among the strongest linguistic and literary currencies available to a writer, it seems natural that a French text would take front seat to its Kreyòl counterpart. Indeed, many scholars remark that scholarship on Frankétienne concentrates on *Les Affres* often to the exclusion of the other two (Kreyòl) *Dezafi* texts. This would lead us to question why the author would write in a beautifully literary (yet marginal) language—one that even within his own country only a handful would be able to read—only to have it be passed over for its more accessible French version. This, of course, is not to undermine the significant contributions that *Dézafi* has made to the Haitian and Caribbean literary canons. And yet, it wouldn't be entirely accurate to say that he was addressing literary centers by recreating his work in French. In spite of evidence of his "frantic yearning to be understood," there are still numerous proverbs and popular images woven into his texts, giving the uninitiated francophone reader a nagging feeling that "there exists an indigenous resonance to which s/he does not have access" (Glover, 2010, p. 201). Yet, even with the challenges that *Les Affres* presents the francophone reader both thematically and linguistically, there were still those who felt that *Les Affres* was not

Haitian *enough*. Perhaps one of the most surprising critiques has come from the very authors who so lauded Frankétienne's Kreyòl writing for its innovation and vision. In a strange twist, it was *because* of the universal dimension of writing the *Dezafi* story in French that Raphaël Confiant suggested that *Les Affres* was an "escapist solution, then, for a Creolophone author who feigns not to notice the red earth of the hills or the sadness of the coconut trees in the evening mist" (Confiant, 1994, p. 174, trans. K. Glover). Casanova likewise states that universalizing is potentially dangerous to emerging literary systems as it can deny a work's specific historical/political lineage (see Casanova, 2004, pp. 154-156).

However, these criticisms ignore the philosophy driving Frankétiene's work: to explore the aesthetic and linguistic capabilities of the spiral, "to see the world in his island, his island in the world" (Glover, 2010, p. 168). This universal approach makes his works at once rooted in Haiti/the Caribbean, and also unrooted from any fixed point in time and space. This, by extension, also makes Spiralism incompatible with many organized literary and cultural movements within the postcolonial New World, which often seek to promote nationalist agendas in order to affirm their legitimacy. The linguistic, thematic and aesthetic manifestations of Spiralism, while in many ways similar to movements like Indigenism, Negritude, *antillanité*, or *créolité*, thus also challenge the expectations and assumptions of their colleagues on how to represent or define the realities of the Caribbean. Indeed, the "quasi-celebrity status" that Martinican writers have particularly enjoyed in the postcolonial francophone community, interestingly, perhaps raises questions of further divisions between "central" and "peripheral" literatures within marginalized communities themselves (Glover, 2010) (Douglas, 2012). As Latin American/Caribbean literary production began to successfully penetrate leading literary markets, there also emerged a certain formula of what centrally-located readers came to expect from these regions. The Boom Era of hispanophone New World literature in North America serves as a cautionary example of the difficulty a marginal author faces in breaking out of stylistic demands once a certain type of literature has been accepted within a dominant system. Likewise, one could perhaps trace a similar tendency in francophone Caribbean literature; as Laurent Dubois remarks "among writers and intellectuals largely (and perhaps unavoidably) tied to metropolitan sites

of publishing, payment, and criticism, the process of trying to out-Caribbean one another may be inevitable "(Dubois, 2012, p. 179). That Frankétienne resists the pressures to *become* Fort-de-France, Paris, Montreal, or New York (Douglas, 2012, p. 193) once again attests to his primary contribution to Haitian letters on the whole, to his inward vision, and to the ability to forge new paths in times of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. In the end, the resulting literature (whether in French or in Kreyòl) exists for the sake of literature and creation, and does not aim to respond to the demands of metropolitan or periphery culture industries. It is "on the one hand, the humanist continuation of Haitian Indigenism and, on the other, a step toward the complete renewal of world literature" (Glover, 2010, p. xii).

In spite of the many obstacles surrounding the marginality of Haitian/Kreyòl literature and inherent in the texts themselves, Frankétienne's career has enjoyed a subdued success in international literary centers. Casanova notes that literary prizes "are responsible mainly for making the verdicts of the sanctioning organs of the republic of letters known beyond its borders" (Casanova, 2004, p. 146), with the Nobel Prize of Literature constituting the crowning testament to consecration by the international literary system and the ultimate payout in terms of amassing literary capital. Casanova explains that due to the unease felt by nationalist discourses in the wake of the World Wars, the Nobel Prize academy (based in Europe and predominantly made up of Europeans) sought a new criteria by which to judge their candidates: notably, one that avoided nationalist proclamations and appealed to universalist tendencies. Since then, the role of the Nobel Prize committee then can be seen as establishing the standards of universality with the aim of uniting the world literary space. That Frankétienne's Spiralist (re)writing just happens to support such visions, then, is a coincidence rather than an indication of the author's own ambitions; Frankétienne was rumored to be on the short list for the Nobel Prize in 2009, and indeed, many anticipate that his day could still be yet to come. In the meantime, Frankétienne has amassed many other international recognitions and awards in the course of his lifetime, including being named both the UNESCO Artist for Peace and Commander of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture.

Especially as more and more Haitians fled to neighboring countries as political and

economic refugees, the need for art that reflected mediation of Haitian and universal values instead of militant idealism became all the more relevant. By writing on the Haitian condition in a universal way, Frankétienne has carved out a space for a mode of literary expression that permits renewal, negotiation, and inclusiveness. While his entire collection of creative works (both written and visual) are dedicated to his Spiralist vision, *Dézafi*[1] will always stand in the Haitian literary canon as not just the first Kreyòl novel, but the first Great Haitian Novel. As such, it unlocked a "Creole re-created by and for writing. [*Dézafi*] released for new generations the basic tool of this approach of self-knowledge: interior vision" (Bernabé et al., 1990, p. 890).

4 Seasons of Solitude: Embodied Translation in the Haitian Diaspora

> *"My country [...] is one of uncertainty. When I say 'my country' to some Haitians, they think of the United States. When I say 'my country' to some Americans, they think of Haiti."*
>
> (*The Butterfly's Way*, 2001, Edwidge Danticat)

The 60s and 70s saw a swell of interest in exploring the written and artistic possibilities of Kreyòl and Haiti's popular culture. *Haiti-Littéraire* and the *Mouvman Kreyòl Aysien* both channelled the creative resources of artists and intellectuals to try to empower Haiti's popular language and culture. These associations recruited writers who produced vast amounts of Kreyòl literature and who endeavoured to expand the use of Kreyòl. They also turned to the airwaves, with *Haiti-Littéraire*'s Radio Cacique and the *Mouvman*'s Radio Caraïbes, to spread their message and host educational and cultural programming, broadcasting traditional music, children's shows, radio theatre, poetry recitals and the like. By raising awareness and interest in Haiti's cultural capital, these activists hoped to further empower a literary Kreyòl and slowly bridge the gap between the literary and artistic production of the educated few and the un(der)-educated many. However, these efforts did not go unnoticed and language and cultural advocacy became an increasingly dangerous occupation.

Jan Mapou, who was a member of the *Mouvman*, explains: "[Empowering the people through language] was something that [...] Duvalier was not interested in. [...] We realized the power and importance that culture and literacy could have, and that was a threat to the

regime" (Perez-Duthie, 2004, n.p.). Although Duvalier himself once touted the importance of claiming an authentic identity for Haiti, education of the masses was potentially dangerous for someone with authoritarian ambitions. Thus, the political environment in Haiti became increasingly hostile towards intellectuals and culture activists, and their arrest, torture, execution and exile became more frequent. Indeed, on April 6 of 1969, Duvalier's *tonton macoutes* came to the radio station and arrested Mapou, along with some of his other Kreyòl activist colleagues. They were sent to the notorious Fort Dimanche, where they were beaten, stripped of their clothing, handcuffed together and finally thrown in a cell with eleven other men where they would remain for four months and four days (Glasgow, 1999, n.p.), (Perez-Duthie, 2004, n.p.). When he was finally released, Mapou realized that he could no longer stay in his country. While artists and activists were more convinced than ever of the need to promote Kreyòl culture, they no longer had the freedom to continue with their work, and increasingly, those who were not either imprisoned or killed opted to go into exile, with many finding themselves in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Canada and the US.

When one considers that the readership for Haitian literature was already small due to the country's weakened education system, the attacks against cultural producers only further strained the capabilities of the budding literary system, and played a significant role in the brain drain that affected all areas of economic and creative development. Frankétienne paints a bleak picture of this era, saying in an interview: "It was a painful time when our best friends, writers and artists, were forced, for diverse reasons, to leave the country. Seasons of separation when our heart, out-of-tune, grated like a cracked accordion. Seasons of solitude. Seasons of heartbreak and disillusion" (cited in Taleb-Khyar, 1992, p. 389). Indeed, Frankétienne's prolific literary career from within Haiti was nothing short of miraculous, as he managed to evade capture while many of his colleagues were not so fortunate. As corruption, violence and oppression became widespread, and as more and more of Haiti's educated class were killed or fled, the question was no longer of Haiti's literary viability, but rather of its longevity. This leads us to ask, as did Edwidge Danticat: "How do writers and readers find each other under such dangerous circumstances?" (Danticat, 2010, p. 10)

4.1 Haitians Abroad

Mapou, like many Haitians, began a new life in the United States, settling in New York City. But he would soon discover that just because the political atmosphere was less oppressive didn't necessarily mean that the principles for which he fought and sacrificed his livelihood in Haiti would be suddenly liberated from linguistic and cultural struggles:

> After I settled in New York City, I realized that there was the same problem in New York City that I saw in Haiti, but it was [worse]. The Haitians in New York City did not want anything to do with their culture, language and roots. And they were also encouraging their children to speak English only. Parents were neglecting the Creole language and they were not passing it on to their children or speaking it with them. They themselves did not speak English. They used a broken English to speak with their children. The young children could not speak even to their grandmother when she visited from Haiti. (Cited in Airey, 2008, p. 130)

Indeed, exile found Haitians in the heart of some of the most dominant language and cultural centers in the world and facing unprecedented challenges in maintaining their collective identity. These new linguistic and cultural challenges were especially difficult for Haitians living in the United States, which, as I will discuss later, casts a linguistic and cultural shadow unlike that of any other global power to date.

Paul Brodwin describes diaspora communities as being linked through a shared cultural legacy that connects a geographically dispersed group; collective subjectivity, thus, can be understood as the way that people define their group's essence and represent it to others (Brodwin, 2003, pp. 383-384). However, as Mapou's observation shows, this common cultural thread is not a static entity, untouched by the specificities of individual external constraints. Culture in the form of collective self-representation is heavily influenced by the everyday experiences and interactions of a spatially localized people. Those who are dispersed and in contact with foreign influences, on the other hand, will necessarily encounter and subsequently internalize their collective subjectivity differently (*ibid.*, p. 384); in the case of Haitians residing in and growing up in the US, the temptation to "Americanize" is therefore inevitable. Furthermore, Brodwin notes that: "Collective identity depends on the politics of location, and the location of diasporas is (by definition) plural, fragmented, dynamic and open" (*ibid.*).

This understandably makes it difficult to qualify what then constitutes the definitive diaspora experience, especially when one considers that the Duvalier dynasty lasted for almost 30 years, resulting in different waves of asylum-seekers destined for different locations, each with their own particular reasons for needing to leave.

While culture plays an important role in many societies in preserving a sense of commonality amongst citizens, culture has historically been especially significant to Haiti. When totalitarian regimes rise and fall, when foreign troops invade, when natural disasters raze villages and cities, culture has remained one of the most constant pillars of Haitian society. Exile is but one of many difficulties that Haitians—and by extension, Haitian writers—have had to contend with. But far from fading as the years of exile tally up, the cultural memory of those in the diaspora has continued to develop and evolve and take on new life within the context of its writing. Frankétienne has argued: "You carry your country deep inside you. And when you have reached a certain level of maturity, it is very difficult, and maybe impossible, to separate psychologically and mentally from the country which has nurtured your childhood and youth, even if you are physically far from it" (cited in Taleb-Khyar, 1992, p. 391). In this sense, then, the second "rupture" that Yanick Lahens notes within the Haitian literary system is that of the exiled writer, and how (s)he carries Haiti into exile while connecting with both a Haitian and a new readership.

Even within the rupture, however, the individual directions taken by these writers are plural and fragmented. While many writers originating from Haiti still feel a strong attachment to their motherland, it is only natural that individuals would internalize and manifest this physical exile differently, resulting in a myriad of individual responses. Some, like Jan Mapou and those belonging to the *Sosyete Koukouy*, a reincarnation of the *Mouvman Kreyòl*, continued to focus on Kreyòl language development and the promotion of Haiti's popular and traditional art forms; others, like Dany Laferrière, chose to write in a dominant language and sought to push back against the categories and labels that followed them as Immigrant/Minority/Haitian writers, wanting instead to be acknowledged simply as writers unconstrained by labels and borders. These individual responses, however, highlight certain restraints with regards to a Haitian literary system. While the work of Mapou and the

Sosyete serves as an invaluable resource to both the continuation of Haiti's popular language and culture, it is still subject to marginality by being only accessible to Haitians. On the other hand, there is a tension between a writer like Laferrière, who *says* he is unbound by designations of Haitian or Caribbean, and the irresistible impulse of North American literary apparatus to cast him in that role. Indeed, of the freedoms and limitations in establishing a collective subjectivity of diaspora writers Brodwin states that: "Members of a given diasporic enclave within a larger dominant society are both agents with the capacity to author their (disclocated) lives and 'subjects' fixed into place by surrounding structures and discourses" (Brodwin, 2003, p. 385).

It is from this in-between state of agency and lack thereof where we find yet another select group of Haitian writers that quite literally "author" their experiences as they come to terms with identity issues surrounding Haitian transnationalism, and in particular, experiences of being Haitian in North America.* Furthermore, because many of these authors were young when they were taken away from Haiti, they stand in the unique position of having spent their formative years in Haiti, while being formally educated and acculturated to life abroad. In exploring the state of their in-betweenness, these writers are able to manifest the "embodied translation" (Casanova, 2004, p. 258) of their lived experiences as Haitian/Haitian-American in their adopted language. What results is a literature that is at once rooted in the "popular" lived experiences of Haitians during a certain period of time, while making itself accessible to a vast international readership.

4.2 Mediating National Identities

We have seen thus far how Haitian literature has evolved out of the legacy of many dedicated writers. Many of these writers' contributions emerged in historically significant periods, offering insightful commentaries on the realities of the era while providing creative responses to the questions of language and identity. While writers once strove to prove Kreyòl as

*Although Haitian communities have settled in many parts of the globe, the largest concentration can be found in North America. Thus, I am choosing to concentrate on the North American diaspora experience, with particular focus on United States.

a capable and worthy vehicle of popular, lived experiences in Haiti, many writers of the diaspora are likewise opting for other languages that reflect new questions and experiences as a result of transnationalism. Indeed, Suzanne Crosta writes: "As linguistic boundaries are being crossed, so abound questions on a weakened Haitian state, the impact of transnational communities, globalization of markets and the future of Haitian literature, both as both a symbolic commodity, to borrow Pierre Bourdieu's term, and a work of art" (Crosta, 2003, pp. 191-192).

Although this new direction in the Haitian literary tradition once again brings formidable outside language cultures into the question, the nature of the relationship between these peripheral and dominant players has changed since Morisseau's time. The writers of the Occupation era, and to some extent during the Duvalier era, wanted to promote Haiti's marginalized but majority, homegrown Kreyòl language culture in response to the foreign, dominant French discourses touted by an elite minority; in a reversal, while many Haitians abroad still wanted to promote their marginalized *languidentity* (Airey, 2008, pp. 109-110), they were now in the minority and living in countries where dominant languages are spoken by the majority. As such, Haitian writers living abroad participate in a different kind of subversion by adopting these dominant languages for their work. According to Casanova, writers who *choose* to create in dominant languages (as opposed to inheriting them from residual effects of colonialism) manage to divert literary capital and benefit from the resources that come with healthy literary systems. Furthermore, just as Frankétienne's experiments in literariness signalled one of the greatest creative ruptures in the Haitian literary tradition, the subversive nature of those choosing to represent immigrant and other experiences in dominant languages brought fresh, innovative perspectives to the language in question. Indeed, Casanova writes: "[The] aesthetic of writers who adopt a great literary language with the intention of transforming it is from the outset more innovative, on account of the intrinsic literary capital of this language, than that of writers who promote a new language having no capital at all" (Casanova, 2004, p. 284). While it would be incorrect to state that Kreyòl at this juncture has "no capital at all", it is true that the Kreyòl language itself was, and continues to be, far away from becoming a global language in the same capacity as

French or English. However, dominant languages are now being "tamed" by Haitian (and other postcolonial and otherwise marginalized) writers in order that they might convey the depth of the Haitian literary style and national consciousness, which amounts to what Paul Bandia describes as a source-text oriented translation process (Bandia, 1993, p. 74). It is for this reason that Salman Rushdie insists not on the "loss" that comes with the transformation of language and identity, but rather on what can be gained with such mergers (Rushdie, 1983, p. 112).

4.2.1 Writing as Translation

As noted above, according to new modes of literary and translation scholarship, the writing of oral narratives in dominant language literary markets, whether through a conscious or unconscious translation, can be considered as a type of interlingual translation as the author is attempting to represent the cultural Self in the language of the Other (Bandia, 2008, pp. 2-3). Moradewun Adejunmobi (1998) theorizes this concept by proposing the term *compositional translation* to account for internal mediation processes:

> I will identify as *compositional translations* texts which are published in European languages and which contain occasional or sustained modification of the conventions of the European language in use, where 'versions' or 'originals' in indigenous African languages are non-existent. [...] It should be noted, furthermore, that the modification of European languages in these texts generally results from a deliberate intent to indigenise the European language (Adejunmobi, 1998, p. 165).

Bandia further argues that there are compelling parallels between postcolonial intercultural writing and translation, with the postcolonial author serving as the "writer-translator whose creativity involves a fair measure of translation, understood metaphorically as the displacement or relocation of African oral culture and aesthetics in colonial language fiction" (Bandia, 2008, p. 12).

This kind of intercultural writing, however, isn't subject to just one kind of translation, but is in fact what Bandia calls "double translation," the initial translation being the transfer of oral narratives into a standard, written form and another translation when these oral traditions are extracted from their minority/peripheral language and carried into a

majority/central language (*ibid.*, p. 3). If we expand this model to encompass the study of a developing Haitian literary system, we will note that the first translation process can be observed in the efforts of Kreyòl pioneers such as Felix Morisseau-Leroy, Frankétienne, and collective movements like the *Mouvman Kreyòl Aysien* and the *Sosyete Koukouy*. As the descendants of these literary forefathers, Haitians of the diaspora who choose to write in dominant languages therefore embody the second element of translation by using the dominant language as a repository for the traditions, orature, history, and poetics they've inherited from their motherland. Yet, because they are able to benefit both from the legacy left by these earlier writers, and the immediacy and wealth of the resources of their adopted culture, writers of the diaspora are, in the words of Casanova, able "to take a shortcut on the road to literary status" (Casanova, 2004, p. 264). Thus the modern Europhone Haitian text emerges from negotiations of transnationalism, transculturality, orature and linguistic hybridity, amounting to the ultimate translated discourse, "one that can only be carried into another language through a complex creative process tantamount to re-translating a translated text" (Bandia, 2008, p. 162), and one capable of succeeding on an international scale in an unprecedented way. This is all the more essential when one considers that these writers' biggest linguistic asset—English—is also one of the biggest threats to Haitian cultural and linguistic viability.

4.2.2 Merging Literary Systems: North America and Haiti

As it stands today, English is the first language of choice among learners of second languages. While there are only approximately 400 million speakers of English as a first language, there are an additional estimated 400 million English speakers as a second language, and this number continues to increase when one accounts for those in the process of learning English; in 2005, UK finance minister Gordon Brown predicted: "In 20 years time, the number of English speakers in China is likely to exceed the number of speakers of English as a first language in all the rest of the world" (cited in E. Allen, 2007, p. 17). The sheer number of English speakers in and of itself is not threatening; after all, the ability to find a common language and understand one another on a global scale has undeniable benefits with regards

to the transfer of knowledge and information. However, as the PEN/IRL Report on the International Situation of Literary Translation shows, this transfer is far from equal, with the Anglo-American publishing market seeking greater opportunities to export rather than import literary goods.

Yet, even in its formidable position, the Anglo-American literary system *needs* other cultural perspectives. Firstly, although the number of people capable of understanding English is great, English also benefits from being a go-to language for translations. As such, any language culture wishing to make itself known to a global audience comes through English; this is by and large what gives English its authority and immense capital today. Secondly, history has shown the dangers that face an empire indifferent to what the rest of the world has to offer, and likewise the hegemonic transcendence of American cultural production has led some to argue that US literature risks falling into a rut of provincialism and becoming out of touch with the rest of the world[†]. Without the intervention of outside voices, one could argue that Anglo-American literature risks losing its own voice, or of becoming hollow and outdated.

However, like any global power, the American publishing apparatus won't willingly give up its privileged position to make room for others. Once again, writers from the periphery must work to claim their place at the upper echelons of American literary production. At the same time, exiled Haitian writers—displaced geographically by politics and displaced internally as postcolonial subjects—just happened to find themselves grappling with new lived experiences and trying to reconcile their memories of Haiti with the language and culture of their new home. This is especially true for the younger generation of Haitians, many of whom spent their childhoods in Haiti with family while their parents left the country to find work and save money until such a time that they were able to be reunited abroad. Thus, as postcolonial, multilingual and hybrid entities, they face, as Bandia remarks, "the same kind of impossibilities as Kafka: impossibility of not writing, impossibility of writing in the colonizer's language, and the impossibility of writing otherwise" (Bandia, 2008, p. 138).

[†]Indeed, Alexander Nazaryan argues in his article, "Why American novelists don't deserve the Nobel Prize", that this threat has been realized, saying that American literature has become "an Oldsmobile in a world yearning for a Prius"(Nazaryan, 2011, n.p.).

Knowing, then, the inevitability of a certain degree of "Americanization" in the diaspora, what does this mean for the Haitian literary system on the whole? Max Manigat, lawyer, scholar of Caribbean history and President of the New York branch of *Sosyete Koukouy*, confronts the question quite frankly, writing: "Does the North American, European, South American or African mass audience doubt the existence of a worthwhile Haitian literature and of highly talented Haitian authors? One may reply in the affirmative" (Manigat, 1992, p. 824).

Apart from the small coterie of Haitian intellectuals and literary specialists, some of the greatest names in the Haitian literary canon (Jacques Roumain, Jacques S. Alexis, René Depestre and Felix Morisseau-Leroy) are almost entirely unknown outside of restricted circles, in spite of the effusive praise these artists receive from the handful of individuals capable of understanding them. This leads Max Manigat to wonder: "How then is it that Haitian books do not succeed in breaching frontiers in a modern world where all that is valuable finds a market ready to welcome it? Is it the problem of language or of the lack of means to break out of our insularity?" (*ibid.*) Although it is gradually gaining some traction, written Kreyòl is still largely unfamiliar to many in the country, which continues to struggle with low literacy rates; therefore Haitian literature in Kreyòl is mostly insular. Furthermore, the social and class issues surrounding French are enduring, with French being mostly inaccessible to Haitians both at home and—apart from the communities of Haitians living in Quebec and France—abroad. In addition, the publishing houses that primarily handle Haitian texts in French and Kreyòl are small and specialized, and their printings tend to run only in the lower thousands. Therefore, Manigat warns that settling for the few thousand Haitian and foreign readers is not sufficient to ensure a viable future for Haitian national literature and continues to condemn them to the periphery. The solution is thus to "break the barriers of insularity" (*ibid.*, p. 826) by connecting to an even more vast foreign readership through translation.

Manigat notes that Haitian authors are slowly but increasingly becoming recognized abroad through translation, and Haitians are gradually transcending national barriers, finding audiences in Germany, Switzerland, Holland and Brazil (to name a few notable examples). To be discovered by such a sleek and modern publishing industry as exists in North America,

and especially in the United States, "would render inestimable service to a nation which is better known for the brutality of its dictators and the facile propaganda of its enemies against Vodou" (*ibid.*). But finding recognition in the Anglophone American market is no easy task. Anne-Sophie Siminel, Director of Cultural Services at the French Embassy in New York, in conclusion to her remarks on the unequal exchange of cultural capital between French and American markets, correctly attributes the success of promoting a foreign literature in a country to the quality of its translator (E. Allen, 2007, p. 89). Likewise, Marie-José N'Zengou-Tayo and Elizabeth Wilson wonder whether Caribbean texts can only be adequately translated by a translator with "an in-depth knowledge of the region's cultures, the kind of knowledge acquired through personal experience or meticulous research" (N'Zengou-Tayo & Wilson, 2000, p. 79). Following these two trains of thought, then, one could conclude that the most effective promoters of Haitian literature in a country like the United States would be an individual capable of navigating the North American cultural landscape while also exhibiting insider knowledge of Haiti's language and culture.

4.3 The Diaspora Writer-Cum-Translator

Viewing (im)migrants' work through the translation perspective ultimately allows a universal readership to access the work from a better-informed position, while also liberating the dislocated writer from reductionist "source-"/"target-"oriented models of analysis that try to box the writer and his/her creation into monolithic national identities. Yannick Lahens writes: "The writer's exile is often perceived as a simple departure from his native country. Therefore the critic is always tempted to measure the degree of acculturation in the work produced by the writer in the host country, whether to analyze the sterilizing or on the contrary stimulating effects of exile on literary creation" (Lahens, 1992, p. 735). In both of these instances, the reader is essentially relying on the writer to teach them, to fill the role of cultural interpreter. However, Mardorossian deconstructs this tendency, saying:

> It used to be—and too often still is—the case that the mere mention of a writer's condition of exile was sufficient to imply certain foundational premises about his or her work. Exile writers, for some instance are often seen as better

> equipped to provide an 'objective' view of the two worlds they are straddling by virtue of their alienation. They are ascribed the status of neutral observers, a detachment on which—according to the high modernist tradition that still dictates the discourse of exile—their literary authority is based. Their 'privileged' status as in-betweens, mediators between two cultures thus often becomes the cue that grounds interpretation and constructs a binary logic between an alienating 'here' and a romanticized 'homeland' [...] (Mardorossian, 2002, p. 16).

Yet, the reality of the migrant's life is far more complicated than simple "acculturation" models could convey; indeed, Mardorossian cites Hamid Naficy's study of Iranian immigrants in Los Angeles, arguing migrancy is based on "ambivalences, resistances, slippages, dissimulations, doubling, and even subversion of the cultural codes of *both* the home and host societies" (Mardorossian, 2002, p. 17). As such, analyzing the works of immigrant writers as "translations"—personal processes of mediation and transfer—rather than as "interpretations"—which implies a certain degree of distance and neutrality—shifts the way we can receive such works. Few have translated the emigrant Haitian experience as effectively, or received as much critical acclaim, as Edwidge Danticat.

4.3.1 Edwidge Danticat

Where Felix Morisseau and his generation focused almost exclusively on organizing collective movements on national identity, and where Frankétienne proposed the boundlessness of Haitian literature, Edwidge Danticat weaves narratives that explore issues of identity for Haitians, and effectively turns English into a vehicle for conveying the Haitian reality. Edwidge Danticat has by far had one of the most successful literary careers of any Haitian writer to date, thanks in no small part to her ability to tell rich and poignant stories about Haiti and Haitians in a highly accessible language. The use of a dominant language makes it accessible to a more global audience, but the subject matter is often rooted in the very real lived experiences of Haitians and the Haitian diaspora, and Danticat's stories are frequently informed by events in her own life. Like many young Haitians of her generation, her parents left for the US to find work, leaving her to spend her early years with her aunt in Port-au-Prince, where she spoke Kreyòl and where she first discovered her love for words and reading. Danticat always dreamed of being a writer, although never did she imagine that it could be

a reality for her. In an interview, she confessed, "I don't think I read a single female writer until I came to the United States. So writing almost felt like it was a forbidden activity. Being poor and being female, it was unheard of to write books. It was a double transgression" (Lyons, 2003, p. 192). When at the age of 12 she finally moved to the US to be with her parents, however, they settled in Brooklyn, NY; "Thus her new home was only a borough away from the epicentre of world publishing, and her journey supplied her with the subject for which she is best known—the paradoxes of migration" (Alexandre & Howard, 2002, p. 110). She has since confessed that she doesn't believe she would have ever attained this level of success if she had remained in Haiti, where writers often have to pay out of pocket to see their work published (""Reborn in the USA"", 2002, n.p.).

Although Danticat is now trilingual, she didn't speak English at all when she first moved to New York. Yet, due to her relatively young age when she left Haiti, she found herself confronted with English at a time when she was still not fully adept in French, and Kreyòl, her mother tongue, was still a language predominantly restricted to home and daily life. As a result, she grew to regard English as her "stepmother tongue," "in the sense that you have a mother tongue and then an adopted language that you take on because your family circumstances have changed, sometimes not by your own choice" (Shea & Danticat, 1996, p. 387). When it came to writing, however, she was quick to adapt and never saw her stepmother tongue as a hindrance to her dream to write. The ability of Caribbean authors to find their voice in writing is something that Edwidge Danticat has always been aware of, especially given Haiti's own history of authors writing in a language that is not entirely their own: "I learned a great deal from reading Jacques Roumain because he captured so much of Creole in French. That's what I try to do in English, so that our voices can still come across, so that people can recognize a different voice even if I'm translating myself when I write" (Shea, 2000, p. 65).

This "different voice," however, is key to her success in American, and indeed, global literary markets. Her writing has been described as fresh, lyrical, steely, and concise, which largely comes from her unique experience of internally translating language. For example, often times, Danticat's internal experience of translating languages and culture are

a simultaneous endeavor:

> There aren't always literal parallels between words or places. We don't have high-rise buildings in Haiti, so even if I said the word 'skyscraper' in Creole, I'd have to find another way to explain what that's referring to, a building so tall it seems to scrape the sky. When I first came to the United States, I had to do a lot of translations like that in my own mind. You have to take some things from one culture and combine them with another to create a common language. That merging becomes creative. So if I tried to tell my grandmother, who never left Haiti, what an escalator is, I might have to say it's like a long mat that moves, a magic carpet of sorts. And that becomes a kind of creative language of its own. (Lyons, 2003, p. 188)

The resulting creative language is manifest in her work as well, and is among the more visible artefacts of her non-American origins. Danticat has also confessed to hearing her characters speaking in Kreyòl in her mind; as an Anglophone writer, she thus simultaneously interprets what her characters mean (Gan, 2011, n.p.). She also acknowledges her work is a personal translation in the sense that it allows her to reconcile her migration through language and the memories she carries of her ancestral land. Danticat relies heavily on Haitian popular and oral culture to inform her writing, saying, "just because you write things down doesn't mean you don't remember them or lose the oral traditions. On the contrary, you now have two different ways of telling your story" (Lyons, 2003, p. 190). In fact, Danticat generously uses Haitian proverbs and cultural references in her stories, even featuring them prominently as the titles of works like *Krik? Krak!*, *After the Dance*, *Behind the Mountains*, and *The Dew Breaker*. Such negotiations between Haitian and American *languidentities* are what affirm her hybridity, turning her into Salman Rushdie's "translated" subject (Rushdie, 1983, p. 112). Indeed, although she is often described as Haitian-American, many have argued that, like many global citizens, her identity is situated in the hyphen, which is to say in between the two countries, and not fully in either location (Benitez-Rojo, 1998, p. 60). As such, I will discuss how recurring themes of memory and transnationalism in her works can be read as a collection of compositional translations, giving her readers glimpses into unfamiliar territories, serving as a testament to the many others like her, and reaching a wide enough audience to solidify her reputation as one of the most recognizable young writers in contemporary Haitian *and* American fiction.

Translating Self: *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994)

Her first novel, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) was, for many American readers, "their first real exposure to Haiti" (Alexandre & Howard, 2002, p. 110). As a story about a young Haitian girl's journey from living with her aunt and grandmother in Haiti to finding herself in the US with a mother she hardly remembered, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* in many ways is a "fictional autobiography," borrowing liberally from Danticat's own experience of emigrating from Haiti to rejoin her parents. Danticat has often expressed that her first year in the US was one that carried a heavy feeling of loss—"loss of my childhood and of the people I left behind, and also of *being* lost"—leading Anne Malena to argue that for writers like Danticat, leaving Haiti to live abroad was like being given a "second childhood," an opportunity to explore and redefine her changing identity, one Danticat found through writing (Malena, 2003, p. 202). The "doubleness" of identity (i.e. Haitian and American) as expressed in writing ultimately amounts to a translation (negotiation) of her dislocated condition; a "translation" in the sense that her writing doesn't invent a new self, but that it takes stock of the cultural fragments she brought with her into exile (Malena, 2003) and reassembles it in such a way as to make sense of her transition between worlds. As such, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, told in first person narrative through the voice of Sophie Caco, serves as an account of Danticat's own process translating her Haitian and American selves by utilizing memory of Haitian oral traditions to negotiate the physical displacement of emigration.

The contradictory feelings of "home" as a physical and non-physical presence is familiar to Sophie Caco early on. She and her aunt have lived in the village of Croix-des-Rosets for as long as she can remember and she feels as though her aunt is like her mother (as evidenced by Sophie wanting to give Atie a handmade Mother's Day card). Yet, she is subtly groomed to view her rightful place alongside her mother, Martine, even though her only memories of her mother came through photographs, cassette tapes, and stories recounted to her by her Tante Atie—stories that divulged her favorite flower (daffodils), of told tales of Atie and Martine's youth, and of how Sophie came to be born with a mother and no father ("She told me the story of a little girl who was born out of the petals of roses, water from the stream, and a chunk of the sky" (Danticat, 1998 [1994], p. 47)), but stories which Sophie

herself had never witnessed nor experienced. Thus, from the beginning of the book, there is a discord between the physical and non-physical presence of home: she feels herself at home with her surrogate mother and in Haiti, but she is told she belongs with her phantom biological mother in a foreign country.

When Sophie finally embarks on her journey to the US and sees Martine for the first time, she is struck by how her mother's physical appearance is different—thinner and more hollow—than in the photographs she saw of her in Haiti. Sophie also remarks that her own physical appearance seems to have transformed on the journey to the US as well:

> New eyes seemed to be looking back at me. A new face all together. Someone who had aged in one day, as though she had been through a time machine, rather than an airplane. Welcome to New York, this face seemed to be saying. Accept your new life. I greeted the challenge, like one greets a new day. As my mother's daughter, and Tante Atie's child (*ibid.*, p.49).

Thus, as Malena notes, Sophie immediately recognizes the pre-cultural/-lingual translation that has occurred as a result of her physical transition to her new "home." However, Sophie's self-integration into her new migrant identity (namely, coming to terms with her American and Haitian identities) has not yet caught up to the physical changes which have occurred. To further prove the physical disconnect of "home" being with her mother, Sophie and Martine often remark how there is little physical resemblance between mother and daughter. These physical differences—difference of physical actuality verses physical imagination, difference in appearance as a result of journey, and difference of appearance between mother and child—reinforce the importance that physical expectations play in the immigrant's journey, yet they also reveal the failure of expectation to resolve the issues of identity that Haitian emigrants face. The inadequacy of the physical to complete the self-integration process is explored through non-physical processes, namely through stories.

Storytelling was an integral part of both Sophie's and Danticat's upbringing; Sophie hears stories—both family stories, and traditional stories and parables—from her Tante Atie; Danticat likewise experienced the power of stories through her grandmothers and aunts, saying, "[it's] true, a lot of people in my life were not literate in a formal sense, but they were storytellers. So I had this experience of just watching somebody spin a tale off the top

of her head" (Barsamian, 2003, n.p.). In this regard, both Sophie's and Danticat's primary experiences with storytelling came from their surrogate parents (especially their aunts) while their biological parents were abroad. On this subject, Isa María Soto wrote that surrogate parenting "can be considered an integral and vital part of [the] circular movement that works to maintain an historical and cultural continuity between the migrants and the communities that send them forth" (cited in Hewett, 2009, p. 130). However, the continuity between the cultural and historical and the reality of the migrant experience is not so simple a transition as that, as we can see through Sophie's struggles with reconciling the stories she was led to believe about her mother and her life in America, and the reality of the situation she finds herself in.

For example, Sophie learns that the story of her fatherless birth is sadder than the story that Tante Atie liked to tell: "'The details are too much,' [Martine] said. 'But it happened like this. A man grabbed me from the side of the road, pulled me into a cane field, and put you in my body. I was still a young girl then, just barely older than you'" (Danticat, 1998 [1994], p. 61). The blunt revelation of Martine's rape is a far cry from the colorful (and ambiguous) story that Atie tells, resulting in a translation of experience that causes Sophie to feel marginalized by her own mother. Furthermore, Sophie has difficulty forging a meaningful relationship with her mother, her supposed "first friend" (*ibid.*, p. 24), due in no small part to Martine's physical "testing" for Sophie's virginity, a tradition that Martine was herself subjected to by Grandmé Ifé. Thus, the expectations of America that were given to Sophie in Haiti—of a rekindled mother-daughter relationship, and of finding her place in the great Land of Opportunity—did not meet up with the actual lived experiences, resulting in a fragmented, unreconciled personal journey, and a feeling of still being lost in translation.

This fragmented view of the self between identities is also a struggle her mother faces, although for her, migration necessitates direct translation and equivalence in order to cover up personal and national traumas (most notably, her rape by the *tonton macoute*, leading to her pregnancy with Sophie). This is best evidenced by the literal translation Sophie observes on her mother's answering machine: "*S'il vous plaît, laissez-moi un message.* Please leave me a message. Impeccable French and English, both painfully mastered, so that her voice

would never betray the fact that she grew up without a father, that her mother was merely a peasant, that she was *from the hills*" (*ibid.*, p.223). For Sophie's mother, these identities are in conflict with one another, and the physical traumas suffered in her past make her unwilling to integrate them as she tries to forget. Unable to reconcile her Haitian, French and American selves, she therefore moves between identities, "forever resisting possible self-transformation from these translations" (Malena, 2003, p. 210), ultimately never finding herself.

However, Malena notes that as a younger subject of displacement, Sophie is positioned to be a more natural inhabitant of two worlds. Sophie attends a Haitian Bilingual school, where she learns both French and English, and where she witnesses the slowly evolving code of communication that New York Haitians have adopted, a mix of English, French and Kreyòl. She even remarks the similarity between her adopted languages, noting that there were words "that looked almost the same in French, but were pronounced differently in English: *nationality*, *alien*, *race*, *enemy*, *date*, *present*" (Danticat, 1998 [1994], p.66). She is thus given the opportunity on the linguistic level to gradually grow into her American identity through acquiring the English language. Yet, as she ages, and leaves her mother's home to marry an American jazz musician, Sophie still feels as though there is something missing. She must reassemble the pieces of her past and present Haitian/American identities, ultimately allowing her complete translation in both the physical (the physical transformations she undergoes from a child to adult, as a mother to an American-born daughter, as an inhabitant of Haiti and the US) and the internal (recognizing "home" as someplace that's not necessarily rooted in physical presence, in spite of what she has been lead to believe). She only begins to recognize Haiti as her spiritual home when she returns as an adult many, many years later to escape the marital problems resulting from her psychological distress.

From the beginning of her return journey to Haiti, it becomes clear that Sophie is on a journey of recovery, as evidenced by the conversation between Sophie and a *tap-tap* driver:

> "I still commend you, my dear. People who have been away from Haiti fewer years than you, they return and pretend to speak no Creole."
>
> "Perhaps they can't."
>
> "Is it so easy to forget?"
>
> "Some people need to forget."

"Obviously, you do not need to forget," he said.

"I need to remember" (*ibid.*, p. 95).

To emphasize the importance of remembering, Sophie also responds to Tante Atie's question about whether New York was really as "grand" as it is made out to be by saying: "It's a place where you can lose yourself easily" (*ibid.*, p. 103). Therefore, Sophie must return to Haiti in order to complete her process of self-integration; she must remember her Haitian origins in order to grow into her new Haitian-American identity, to find her place in the hyphen. Indeed, Malena argues that "[for] the immigrant, the [...] device of translation fits only if both worlds are kept alive and enter in a certain harmony with each other, negotiating the balance between the pain of loss and promise of the future" (Malena, 2003, p. 208). Because physical sacrifices of migration have failed to allow Sophie to feel completely rooted anywhere—in her relationship with her mother, in the US, in her marriage, even in her own body—her trip to Haiti serves the purpose of reviving her Haitian self, leading Carine Mardorossian to conclude, "the sense of dislocation and fragmentation resulting from migrancy is only a temporary setback which Sophie overcomes as she rediscovers the alternate systems of knowledge that ground Haitian identity" (Mardorossian, 2002, p. 32).

While the book has many themes woven into its pages, the healing effect of this alternate system of knowledge and understanding is ultimately what concludes *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, signalling that Sophie—and perhaps Danticat as well—has successfully translated the experience of physical displacement through reviving and revisiting memory. This can clearly be seen in the novel's closing lines, coming from Grandmé Ifé:

> "Listen. Listen before it passes. *Paròl gin pié zèl.* The words can give wings to your feet. There is so much to say, but time has failed you," she said. "There is a place where women are buried in clothes the colour of flames, where we drop coffee on the ground for those who went ahead, where the daughter is never fully a woman until her mother has passed on before her. There is always a place where, if you listen closely in the night, you will hear your mother telling a story and at the end of the tale, she will ask you this question: '*Ou libéré?*' Are you free my daughter?"
>
> My grandmother quickly pressed her fingers over my lips.
>
> "Now," she said, "you will know how to answer" (Danticat, 1998 [1994], p. 234).

Words and memories are the only vestiges of their motherland that the diaspora subject can

be assured to always carry with her, and which will ultimately bridge the gap created by transnationalism by, as Grandmé Ifé says, giving wings to her feet. Thus, the individual condition of physical and spiritual displacement is finally reconciled; Sophie is now able to reassemble the fragments of her old life and bring them with her back to America where she will "find" herself through translation (Malena, 2003, p. 211).

However, while Danticat certainly seems to use Sophie to tell at least parts of her own story in her writing-as-mediation process, Sophie's story struck a chord with other Haitians who responded both positively and negatively to the way Danticat chose to represent the Haitian diaspora experience in writing. On the one hand, Danticat remarks that the bulk of her readership are made up of other young Haitian-American women (Alexandre & Howard, 2002, p. 127), hoping to find glimpses of themselves in English language literature. Given that her popularity and success has increased with time, one could conclude that many of the Haitian-American readers of Danticat's work have indeed found something in her stories that resonates with their own experiences. On the other hand, because Danticat has been cast in the role of cultural spokesperson, much of her creative license is denounced on the grounds that she wrongly or inaccurately portrays aspects of Haitian culture. In the case of *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, this criticism came out over Danticat's use of "testing" in telling the stories of Sophie and Martine. Many Haitians (correctly) argued that, while certainly practiced in a limited scope, "testing" is not a common phenomenon in Haiti, and by featuring such a troubling practice in a work which was widely circulated in the West, that she is perpetuating certain stereotypes about Haitian culture. (And one has to wonder whether these criticisms would have come out had Danticat's work not been as successful.) However, the narrative purpose of "testing" was not meant to serve as an anthropological portrayal of Haitian practices for the sake of gawking American readers as much as it was meant to serve as a symbol of the sometimes traumatic site of memory, history, tradition, displacement and identity (Counihan, 2012, p. 37).

Even so, in an Afterword to *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Danticat wrote an open letter to her protagonist, saying: "Your body is now being asked to represent a larger space than your flesh. You are being asked . . . to represent every girl child, every woman from this land. [. . .]

I pray that the singularity of your experience be allowed to exist" (Danticat, 1998 [1994], p. 236). The question of singularity for minority writers is a difficult one, and Danticat feels it's a freedom that is not granted to most: "I wrote the afterword because of the people who insisted on reading the novel as a 'study' of Haitian women. [. . .] I was so naive that I never anticipated that people wouldn't be able to make the distinction between one family's story and an entire group's story" (Lyons, 2003, pp. 190-191). As a result, Danticat decided to expand the function of her transnational writing from focusing on the individual as the subject of translation to encompassing nations and history as sites of translation as well. Her second work, *Krik? Krak!* (1996) served as a response to this first translational exercise. Written in the form of a composite novel, *Krik? Krak!* uses short stories to create a composite portrait of Haitians, both in Haiti and abroad, dealing with transnationalism. Because of the short story form, the composite novel medium facilitates connections of cultural codes and traditions (especially oral narrative) with the modern, "mainstream" Euro-American literary form, yielding a hybrid text befitting its subjects' transnationalism. Furthermore, the African and Caribbean oral tradition is explicitly called into play from the title itself; "Kric?, the one who wants to hear a story asks; Krac!, the narrator responds on agreeing to tell one" (Benitez-Rojo, 1998, p. 60). By employing this title, she establishes her authority as the storyteller, while also acknowledging the community who must respond in order for her to proceed. Thus, in preserving communal, oral components of storytelling in writing, Danticat provides an alternate avenue for translation of the Haitian emigrant experience by claiming the typically fixed, isolated relationship between reading and writing for the purpose of forging dynamic, communal connections.

Danticat's third novel, *The Farming of Bones* (1998) addresses this second translational component by delving further into past national events through piecing together unwritten and oral histories.

Translating History: *The Farming of Bones* (1998)

As evidenced by the personal healing effect it has on Sophie in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, memory is an integral element of Danticat's translational writing. Therefore, it should come

as little surprise that historical remembering would hold a place among Danticat's work as well. Malena argues that an extension of Danticat's "translation" process through the exploration of memory is evidenced through her exploration of collective history as well (Malena, 2003, p. 203). In *Krik? Krak!*, for instance, there are themes that call on the history of the Middle Passage, and the trauma that the Duvalier regime inflicted on the Haitian population is revived in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* as well. Her third work, *The Farming of Bones*, likewise attempts to "excavate" (Shemak, 2002, p. 85) the untold Haitian history behind the Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic by creating a historical fiction that reexamines the racial, linguistic and national histories of Hispaniola.

April Shemak cites literary critics John Beverly and George Yúdice's work on *testmonio* as a consciousness-raising genre, using Yúdice's definition of *testimonio* as:

> an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution, etc.). Emphasizing the popular, oral discourse, the witness portrays his or her own experience as an agent (rather than a representative) of a collective memory and identity. Truth is summoned in the cause of denouncing a present situation of exploitation and oppression or in exorcising and setting aright official history. (Shemak, 2002)

With this in mind, we can thus see *The Farming of Bones* as a type of *testimonio* wherein Danticat wades into one of the lesser-known historical events on the island of Hispaniola and attempts to offer an account of what transpired through the fictional[‡] story of Amabelle Desir.

The Farming of Bones, set in 1937, recounts the systematic detention, torture and massacre of Haitians in the Dominican Republic, in what is now known as the Parsley Massacre. Following the nationalist rhetoric of president Raphael Trujillo, Dominican officials believed that the Dominican Republic needed to purify itself by getting rid of its darker-skinned neighbors. However, Haiti and the Dominican Republic have a long, shared history, and Dominican society is just as stratified as Haitian society along racial lines. Thus, the method for rooting out Haitians living in the Dominican Republic was to ask individuals to pronounce *perejil* (parsley) in Spanish: "...the Generalissimo had a realization. Your

[‡]I will discuss later why it is significant that she chooses to tell this story through fiction rather than non-fiction.

[Haitian] people did not trill their *r* the way we [Dominicans] do, or pronounce the jota. 'You [Haitians] can never hide as long as there is parsley nearby,' the Generalissimo is believed to have said" (Danticat, 1998, p. 304).

The fact that Danticat approaches this historical period in her writing is significant on two fronts. Firstly, in exploring this event she reveals the dangers of demanding perfect equivalence. Much like Martine in *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, the need for "painfully mastered" accents reveals how damaging such demands of equivalence can be; indeed, the consequence for failing to completely assimilate to the target culture results in death for Haitians living in Trujillo's Dominican Republic. The fact that the question of acceptance or rejection—of life or death—comes down to a signifier so minute as a word, however, shows how much "translation" has already occurred along the border between the nations both on the cultural and linguistic level. In fact, at the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic (one of the sites of the story), there are Haitians who have been in the Dominican Republic for generations, and who spoke a mix of "Kreyól and Spanish, the tangled language of those who always stuttered as they spoke, caught as they were on the narrow ridge between two nearly native tongues" (*ibid.*, p.69). Once again the idea of "doubleness" of identity is at the forefront of identity issues, although in this instance, one could view the Haitian subject as having already integrated (having undergone a translation of sorts), and the campaign of Trujillo in effect serves as a reverse translation; a deconstruction of the already mediated linguistic, cultural, and racial identities. Indeed, heavily foreshadowing the divisions to come, Señora Valencia's doctors state that "many of us start out as twins in the belly and do away with each other" (*ibid.*, p.19); certainly, this is further reinforced when Rafael, Señora Valencia's boy twin, dies, while Rosalinda survives, and of course, when Dominicans turn on their Haitian brothers and sisters.

In the greater sense, exploring nationalist deconstructions of the translated self parallels the second translational undercurrent driving Danticat's motivations to write *The Farming of Bones*; it emphasizes her historical revisionist approach by linking the marginalized Haitian story/herstory as it stands against dominant Dominican nationalist/patriarchal historical perspectives (Harbawi, 2007, p. 53). Once again, Señora Valencia's fraternal

twins serve as a significant symbol of these undercurrents: while the boy child was born "coconut-cream colored" (and, significantly, named Rafael after Trujillo himself), the girl child, Rosalinda, was "a deep bronze, between the colours of tan Brazil nut shells and black salsify" (Danticat, 1998, pp. 9-11). For this reason, Amabelle likens the dark-skinned baby girl to an Indian princess, the "Golden Flower" Queen Anacaona, Taíno ruler of pre-Colombian Hispaniola and the figure who most frequently personifies the native resistance to the European colonizers. Much like the Indigenistes discussed in Chapter 2, who rewrote the official history of the Haitian revolution, placing Vodou at the center of the revolutionaries' success, the Taíno Queen's reference here demonstrates the subversive anti-nationalist and gender-based historical perspectives of Danticat's writing, further insisting on the importance of overwritten stories that unite the island through history, and also the seamless familial bond between the twin countries of Hispanola in spite of nationalist interventions.

Likewise, the story of the Parsley Massacre is yet another overwritten historical perspective which Danticat revives and reassembles for the purpose of "summoning truth." Although tens of thousands of Haitians were slaughtered during this campaign, knowledge of this bloody event is not widely known by many Haitians or Dominicans. In an interview, Danticat lamented: "And, from our side, unfortunately, people—my generation, even older—did not really know about this massacre. It's not something we heard about. It wasn't in the history books, I think, in part because it was a shame, this sort of collaboration among the elites of both Haiti and the Dominican Republic. And this was basically done to a lot of poor people, so there was a silence about it over time" (Headlee, 2012, n.p.). Dominican-American writer Julia Alvarez (who has also written on the Trujillo era) also confesses that many Dominicans themselves don't know this chapter of Dominican history. It wasn't until coming to the United States, and talking to Haitians and Dominicans that the full story came to light. However, while it was practically removed from the history books in Dominican Republic, in Haiti the story managed to seep through the generations by way of oral history, from the personal accounts of survivors, or the children of survivors who kept the story alive.

This crucial link to oral tradition is central to Danticat's reasons for writing *The*

Farming of Bones[§], and it features prominently within her writing as well. Because the Parsley Massacre wasn't included in "official" history, its existence is really only confirmed through the transmission of oral accounts, which Danticat alludes to in her works quite frequently. In the short story "Nineteen Thirty-Seven"—also about the Parsley Massacre—from *Krik? Krak!*, she describes the road to the Massacre River as being "covered with sharp pebbles only half-buried in the thick dust" (Danticat, 1996, n.p.), allegorizing the way this event has been buried by official history. And in *The Farming of Bones*, Amabelle narrates: "This past is more like flesh than air, our stories testimonials like the ones never heard by the justice of the peace or the Generalissimo himself" (Danticat, 1998, p. 281). Danticat also writes of graves that "only a broken-hearted old man would ever know how to find" (*ibid.*, p. 264), nodding at both the importance of the interpersonal dimension of storytelling and the role of storytelling in the reassembling of forgotten histories. Likewise, and most explicitly, Danticat writes: "It is perhaps the great discomfort of those trying to silence the world to discover that we have voices sealed inside our heads, voices that with each passing day, grow even louder than the clamor of the world outside" (*ibid.*, p.268). The many told and untold stories that have been transmitted orally serve, much like the short story cycle of *Krik? Krak!*, to paint a composite image of what transpired. It is for this reason that Danticat chose to recount this story through historical fiction rather than non-fiction, saying "[there] is a way of bringing all these different voices into one voice in which you can tell so many different stories through a kind of testimonial that fiction and poetry and even song allows" (Headlee, 2012, n.p.).

The passage of fragmented, oral testimonials into literary fiction is itself a process of translation. When faced with the "inadequacy of imagination" in enshrining past events (especially painful ones that seemingly cannot be reconciled through literature), the writer must gather the fragments of factual iconographies—what Clifford Geertz calls "a world view in droplets"—and bring them together "into a once more graspable whole" (Geertz, 1983, n.p.). By placing factual iconography (the dictatorship, the massacre, the Haitian cane cutters, the blended Kreyòl-Spanish and the actual Massacre sites) against a literary

[§]Indeed, Danticat spoke with many survivors when doing research for this book.

one (the fictional account of Amabelle, and the feminist and nationalist symbols woven throughout the book), the Parsley Massacre comes to possess a new symbolic structure at the hands of Danticat, arriving to us "across a sequence of clashing imaginations and discomfited sensibilities," a passage from "the immediacies of one form of life to the metaphors of another" (*ibid.*). In using fiction to bring attention to this significant, yet unknown event, Danticat thus effectively reclaims this history and infuses it with a symbolic significance that comes to inhabit a space more vast than its fixed place in time and space. Indeed, while life at the "Massacre River" appears to have resumed to normalcy (in fact, Danticat has expressed her surprise at how ordinary life seems at the site of some of the massacre's bloodiest atrocities), there is still an urgency in needing to preserve the memory of the persecution of Dominican Haitians. Danticat explains:

> I had people in my family who went to work in the sugar cane in the Dominican Republic and it is an atrocious situation that is current, it is not one of those situations where you say 'this is over'. But there are still things that even as we come together to remember, the fact that people can be in the Dominican Republic for generations and not get a birth certificate and they can't go to school and all these things that are part of current migration [...] the history sort of overshadows the present [...] and there is always a fear of repeats. This is why it is important when people come together to talk about the past, not just for the sake of talking about the past but also to talk about how we can create a different future with what we know of the past. (Headlee, 2012, n.p.)

It is therefore all the more imperative that Danticat, and writers like her, continue to bring together past and present, orality and literary, reality and imagination. Such translations are what continue to build on the work of the identity politics of Occupation Era *Indigénistes*, and highlight the real world relevance of popular iconography in the manner of writers like Frankétienne. In creating fiction that resonates so profoundly with the current transnational currents, yet is still firmly rooted in Haitian customs, Danticat's stories offer one path for Haitian literature to grow and transform in its ever-evolving process of *littérisation*.

5 Conclusion

Pascale Casanova calls translation "the major prize and weapon in international literary competition, an instrument whose use and purpose differ depending on the position of the translator with respect to the text translated [...]" (Casanova, 2004, p. 133). As we have seen, translation is indeed a multifaceted tool for writers to use as they work to establish the legitimacy of their linguistic and cultural heritage in literature. The path traced in this study is, of course, only one of many possible routes that contemporary Haitian authors have taken to gain literary recognition. I conclude with Edwidge Danticat first of all, because she has arguably experienced some of the greatest success of any Haitian writer to date due to her ability to make it in one of the most competitive and wealthy literary markets in the world. This is best evidenced by her numerous awards and nominations, which include a Pushcart Short Story Prize (1995), an American Book Award (1999), a National Book Critics Circle Award (2007), and a MacArthur Genius Grant (2009). Furthermore, Danticat has been very generous with the symbolic capital her success has afforded to her name. In interviews, she frequently gives credit to the many Haitian writers who came before her, naming Jacques Roumain and Marie Vieux Chauvet as being among some of the most influential writers on her developing Haitian literary identity. She has also spoken publicly and frequently about the talents of Frankétienne, Philippe and Pierre Marcelin, and J.J. Dominique (just to name a few) and she has edited anthologies featuring other contemporary Haitian and Haitian-American authors in works like *The Butterfly's Way* (2001) and *Haiti Noir* (2011). Because of her success, Danticat is in the ideal position to further inform her reading public of the other talents coming from Haiti, and in so doing she makes her audience better disposed

to welcome, or even seek out, further Haitian writers. However, I also chose to conclude with Danticat because, while there are many Haitians writing today who explore alternate literary topics and styles, Danticat successfully, and in many ways deliberately, carries the work of her predecessors into the present day. Carine Mardorossian argues that in making indigenous systems of knowledge, traditions and storytelling methods central to her writing process, "[she] reveals herself the rightful heir of black consciousness movements whose genesis can be traced back to movements like Négritude and Haitian 'Indigenism' " (Mardorossian, 2002, p. 27).

In fact, all of the authors mentioned in this thesis in some way propose variations to the *Indigéniste* movement, the first organized movement compelling Haitian intellectuals to ponder their unique cultural and artistic contributions outside of the constraints of colonial history. Although Haitian literary critics today are largely critical of formal *Indigénisme*, citing its attachment to a mythical African homeland as being escapist and lamenting its gradual turn towards *noirisme* (N'Zengou-Tayo, 1995, p. 5), the founding principles of *Indigénisme*—an interest in popular culture and the Haitian language—is still very much alive in the social and poetic sensibilities of later writers. Furthermore, at its heart, Indigenist movements attempt to rectify the unequal distribution of power, and seek recognition for the contributions of popular culture to developing national identities. As such, I chose to trace the *littérisation* of contemporary Haitian literature along these lines. Whether done out of political will, artistic vision or reclaiming heritage, in sharing this common thread of promoting popular language and culture, these writers use translation to build a case for the viability of Haiti's unique linguistic, aesthetic, and poetic contributions to the global literary marketplace.

Pascale Casanova argues that the *littérisation* of an oral language presents the opportunity for numerous advancements in asserting identity and challenging the literary, linguistic and political status quo (Casanova, 2004, p. 293). As we saw with Félix Morisseau-Leroy, translation was essential for taking an initial stance against the cultural and linguistic dominance of French sensibilities that still loomed over the Haitian educated class. In so doing, he proved the value of literary Kreyòl while simultaneously providing a platform for

traditional, folk motifs, as well as for the overall movement of Haitian intellectuals to reclaim other narratives that were often overwritten to favor the dominant colonial perspectives. Although its dissemination was primarily restrained to Haiti and other marginalized literary markets in Africa and the Caribbean, Morisseau's *Antigòn* was a success for those in the margins seeking to fight back against the cultural and linguistic hegemony exercised by metropolitan centers.

Yet, while *Antigòn* and other works of its ilk made progress in proposing a new set of poetic norms and shifting the attitudes of intellectuals within the country, as servants to the "new nation" (*ibid.*, pp. 274-275) they were necessarily insular and condemned to remain on the margins. Translation would thus once again be key to calling the attention of global literary centers in order to exhibit the literary capabilities of Kreyòl and Haitian writing. Frankétienne's highly innovative (re)writing process did much to enhance the literariness of Haitian literature on the whole. As the first novel written in Kreyòl, *Dézafi*[1] recalled many of the poetic images and symbols of Haiti's popular culture while also exhibiting a distinct postmodern literary style that put his Spiralist philosophy on display. However, while Frankétienne chose to revisit *Dezafi* in French in *Les Affres d'un Défi*, indicating a certain desire to be understood by an external readership, at the same time the unusual use of literary language extended to the French version as well; what resulted was a French-language novel that challenged even Western literary norms as it spiraled around Haitian folk motifs. Yet, although *Les Affres d'un Défi* was perhaps designed to be the access point for international audiences wishing to read the *Dezafi* collection, in the end Frankétienne affirms the preeminence of Kreyòl with the story's latest version, *Dezafi*[2]. Its authority is not because of its concluding position within the *Dezafi* corpus (something which would wrongly emphasize the role of linearity), but because it is the recipient of thematic amplifications as a result of Frankétienne's distinct practice of perpetual creation. As the progeny of the earlier *Dezafis*, *Dezafi*[2] has thus been nourished and revitalized by its predecessors in a process similar to the Brazilians' conception of literary *antropofagia*.

Revitalization also plays a crucial role in the works of writers hoping to reconnect with their Haitian identity. This is especially the case for those in the diaspora, who are physically

disconnected from the day-to-day experiences of Haitian life and for whom central languages are often a more immediate medium for expressing themselves than Kreyòl. Edwidge Danticat has emerged as one of the most dedicated and successful diaspora writers in this regard. Her subject matter is typically rooted in the experiences of Haitians exploring identity issues, and she puts her talents to work in multiple genres, having written novels, young adult novels, short stories, historical fiction, non-fiction, and personal essays. Crucial to her work is the notion of translation: translating the dislocated self, translating community experiences, translating alternate histories, even interlingual translation as she transcribes from Kreyòl to English dialogues she hears in her mind.

Ultimately, however, in choosing to conclude with Danticat, I hope to highlight the potential for Haitian literature to strike a balance between asserting Haiti's unique language and cultural identity, and its ability to flourish in an international market. For now, these two elements seem only to reconcile in Haitian literature written in central languages. However, this does not stop the numerous Haitian writers who continue to produce work in Kreyòl. The writer Deita (pseudonym of Mèsèdès F. Giya, or Mercedes F. Guignard), like Danticat, was among the members of the Haitian diaspora community. Unusually, though, she chose to return to Haiti after the fall of the Duvalier dynasty, which is when she wrote the first feminist novel in Kreyòl, *Esperans Dezire* (1989), a story imagining the first woman president of Haiti (Lang, 2004, p. 137). Like Danticat, Deita's work explored identity issues that were rooted in gender, language, and culture, and was heralded by Haitian literary critic, Lunine Pierre-Jerome, as exhibiting "the sociopolitical, economic and cultural history of Haiti, it is the life story of all the people" (cited in Airey, 2008, p. 12). However, her contribution to Haitian literature is largely glossed over, especially when her career is compared to those of similar writers like Marie Vieux Chauvet (who wrote in French) and Edwidge Danticat. Yet, even though language continues to be a barrier to Kreyòl authors earning international literary recognition, already we have seen how translation has helped bring literary awareness and recognition to Haitian Kreyòl, where it is now positioned to continue to grow and perhaps further expand its readership through interlingual translation. Although the market for literature in translation is competitive, to say the least, a high-profile, international literary

award would certainly help push this potentiality over into reality as the symbolic capital associated with the award is conferred onto the original Kreyòl work, resulting in a likely demand in literary centers for its translation. For now, however, the *littérisation* of Haitian literature has been remarkably successful, considering that the origins of this process took root barely a century ago.

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