Yanick Lahens
Translated by Liz Libbrecht

Haitian Literature: Urgency(ies) of Writing, Dream(s) of Inhabiting

Inaugural Lecture delivered at the Collège de France on Thursday 21 March 2019

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1 Mister Administrator,
Ladies and Gentlemen Professors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

2 I can still remember the emotion that overwhelmed me as I first entered this sanctuary of knowledge known as the Collège de France. It was for a day dedicated to Jules Michelet. Throughout the year, Jacques Seebacher's dazzling erudition had opened a path for us through lands forsaken by official history and which, in *La Sorcière*,[1] Michelet had striven to roam with tenacity and a touch of lucid insanity. With every page, I felt like I was hacking my way with a machete through the *mesquites* in the Haitian shrubland, or even climbing up to a *doko*, one of those entrenched camps of Maroons from colonial times in Saint-Domingue. Jacques Seebacher had preceded us on this long and staggering hike. I experienced a fascinated curiosity for this work of Michelet, who sought to take us to the other side of great History by making visible and audible those whose existence was meant to be erased and whose voices were meant to be gagged. Because they were so feverish and emphatic, those pages opened the doors to another kind of knowledge for me, an unexpected knowledge if ever there was one. Ever since then I have kept those doors open.

3 Across Europe, from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century, heretics, Moors, Jews and witches – all those who, in some way or another, could not fit into the narrow and exclusive paradigm of the model of Man that was taking shape in Europe and would soon impose itself on the whole world – were systematically burned at the stake. In the words of Michelet himself: "[…] the Parliament of Toulouse alone sending four hundred human bodies at one time to the stake. […] But this was still too little for Bodin, a

lawyer from Angers, [...], like Caligula, uttered a prayer that [...] two million men might be gathered together, so as he, Bodin, could sentence and burn them all at one stroke."[2]

4 Roland Barthes, who was present on this occasion, articulated with the sharp and sensitive understanding that distinguishes him, that which makes this work literary: "Michelet belongs to this type of predatory writers (Pascal or Rimbaud) [...]. This voration consists for Michelet in substituting for the oratorical cadence of noble art certain abrupt interpolations [...]. Michelet's recurrent glances into his work are frequent (what Proust [...] called his musician's cadences)".[3]

5 Roland Barthes reminded us that, in "sowing doubt in every corner of common significations and accepted theories",[4] literature reveals the unsuspected when significations encounter obstacles; and that its power lies therein; the power to take words to strange, foreign territories. I never forgot this lesson either.

6 I was barely eighteen years old and I arrived in this place with a head full of the precepts that Haitian schools had erected into truths. The Haitian Revolution was the daughter of the French Revolution and Haitian romanticism is a sun-baked replica of French romanticism. Despite cautious doubt, I leapt frantically into my quest for meaning, in which I was at first repeatedly confronted with the total absence from French university courses of non-French but French-speaking – and especially Haitian – literature. It turned out soon enough that my doubt was justified. In this place, I was neither the "daughter" nor the "copy"; I simply did not exist. I then understood why, in Michelet's atypical novel, I had felt from the start as if I was on the other side, on the side of the bodies that were burned and not on the side of the hand that set the pyre alight. I was the difference.

7 Please allow the writer that I have become to invite you to hear the voice of this difference, the voice of another practice. To make French-speaking worlds emerge, one must resort to new narratives that will render more audible the knowledge, culture and otherness constituting them.

8 I was very quick to connect this lack of teaching to the degree of ignorance surrounding Haitian history. Yet from 1697 to 1804, when it was called "Saint-Domingue", the island was a colony with decisive economic and political weight in French history. Its independence in 1804 constitutes one of the major events, "one of the origins, one of the sources, of contemporary Western civilisation", as Aimé Césaire put it.[5]

9 While I studied Balzac, Sophocles, Rimbaud, Camus, Apollinaire, Faulkner, and Dostoevsky with insatiable pleasure and curiosity, Haitian writings constituted a sound base on which I could stand strong, without wallowing in self-pity, in this boundless conversation with all literatures. I initiated myself in a loving endeavour to decipher great Haitian classics: Frédéric Marcelin, Fernand Hibbert, René Depestre, Roussan Camille, Jacques Stephen Alexis, Jacques Roumain, Clément Magloire-Saint-Aude, Marie Vieux-Chauvet and Frankétienne. I tried to pinpoint the underlying causes of this absence from our curricula of Haitian thinkers such as Anténor Firmin, Jean Fouchard and Jean Price-Mars. You are probably hearing these names of theorists and writers for the first time today, yet their writing in French was fundamental is the education of many of us across the Atlantic.

10 The explanation that I retained for this absence was that Haiti's history and literature did not benefit from the kind of legitimacy that allows one, to quote Michel Foucault, to "produce a discourse of truth" on them. This was moreover supported by another discourse that had already purposefully frozen Haiti, from its very origins, into a figure

of non-humanity, in what Jacques Roumain calls “that inexorable dissemblance” constructed by chroniclers like Médéric Moreau de Saint-Méry or S. J. Ducœurjoly. In 1802 Ducoeurjoly wrote: “it seems that the soul of the negro, especially coming from Africa, is accessible only through the organ of hearing: he is moved only by the noisy sound of a drum or of a strongly articulated voice”.[6] In his seminal book *Le Barbare imaginaire* (*The Imaginary Barbarian*), Haitian anthropologist Laënnec Hurbon revisited representations of the figure of the Barbarian from Ancient Greece to the modern era: “Where the Greeks left the Barbarian in his condition as a non-Greek, with Christopher Columbus the cycle that began was one of defining him as empty, as a lack, due precisely to his non-European condition.”[7] He then proceeded to dismantle, on irrefutable grounds, the specific mechanism that constructed the modern Barbarian based on Haiti: “eager to repel the Haitian contagion of political independence for the peoples still under colonisation and slavery, the whole of the French, British and American nineteenth century revelled in saying the Haitian barbarity.”[8] Throughout the century, an abundant iconography was distilled to support and illustrate these theories which, via Haiti, indirectly affected the entire Black world.

11 I was quick to understand the organisation of knowledge in processes of domination, and the obligatory silencing that it entails. In his book *Silencing the Past*, Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot examines from this perspective the reactions to the Haitian revolution in the early nineteenth-century Western world. For the Haitian student that I was in the late 1970s, this disqualification came with the inevitable “symbolic violence” that Bourdieu speaks of. But I was from an island across the Atlantic where we had long learned from poets such as Anthony Phelps that while literature cannot alleviate symbolic violence, it does allow one to keep going, stubborn and clear-sighted, amidst the densest gloom:

> I carry on, oh my country, my slow poet’s march
> In my ear a sound of chains
> [...]
> And on my lips a taste of salt and sun
> I carry on my slow march in the darkness
> [...]
> Upstream in the bed of your history[9]

12 While some contemporary Haitian writers enjoy undeniable visibility, authors from the nineteenth and especially the twentieth century have not yet emerged from the shadows. This lack of visibility does not only affect Haitian thinkers who are unknown or ought to be better known, but are oh so essential – for instance Jean Casimir, Laënnec Hurbon, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Alain Turnier, Roger Gaillard, and Claude Moïse – and literary critics such as Maximilien Laroche, Max Dominique, Pradel Pompilus, Yolaine Parisot, and Françoise Simasotchi. It persists despite the remarkable work of eminent French historians such as Yves Benot, Marcel Dorigny, Florence Gauthier, and Jean-Pierre Le Glaunec, as well as French anthropologists such as Alfred Métraux and Gérard Barthélemy, and French literary critics such as Léon-François Hoffmann, Régis Antoine, Anne Marty and Yves Chemla.

13 Paradoxically, this lack of awareness in France concerns a space that is qualified as “French-speaking”: evidence, if any were needed, that this qualifier is far from having exhausted the full range of its meanings, and therefore of its potentialities. For, to quote the Haitian writer Jean-Claude Charles, something unquestionably persists, “no longer the letter of that thing, since it does not say its name, ruined as it is by scientific work as much as by concrete experience; but its spirit.”[10] The creation of this Chair is

timely, precisely to counter that very spirit. To stonewall it in the Europe that is now taking shape will take persistence, intelligence and an unwavering conviction that "when humanity meets we all arrive with our hands full."[11]

14 Ladies and Gentlemen Professors,
Mister Administrator,

15 I would like to thank you for welcoming me among you in this prestigious institution and to tell you how honoured I am to inaugurate this Chair of French-Speaking Worlds. To speak before this illustrious assembly is a privilege and a responsibility for me. A responsibility so great that no assurance could suffice to silence my fear in the face of the immensity of the unknown and of questions on the merit of such a privilege. And yet there is no denying that, in preparing to deliver a speech, one can but be acutely aware of the *mise-en-scène* imposed by the use of speech. There is therefore no safety or innocence in this exercise. I would like the words that I utter this evening to be audible, relevant and, I hope, useful.

16 Migratory phenomena have become more pronounced, imaginaries have become more complex, and generations are being born into a fully globalised world. At the same time, epistemologies that differ from those of the Enlightenment are asserting themselves despite the belief that the latter were peerless. This is a sign that the time has come to strip the term *Francophone* of its Eurocentrism and to decolonise this hegemonic knowledge. The word can cause fear, disruption or unease, as can the terms *post-colonial* or *decolonial*. But we will have to risk discomfort and pronounce them, articulate them, because they are reflexive sets that are taking shape, both at the interface between the 1950s critique of colonialism and the 1970s philosophical currents analysing power, knowledge and the subject, and within a context of relinquishment of the idea that only the ontological unfolding of history could take place only within the Empire. Like any thought undergoing a process of consolidation, these reflexive sets progress through a series of leaps and bifurcations, and present themselves as oppositional and subversive.

17 Today, research on the shaping of modernity, of the Empire and of its national designs cannot be separated from research on the colonial world. Haiti is both a product and a matrix of these crossroads, and its literature is one of their first metaphorical expressions. After Alain Mabanckou's teaching, the Collège de France deemed it necessary to create this Chair of French-Speaking Worlds because the changes currently underway are forcing France to rethink its relations with its former colonies, with the diversity of its own citizens and with all the countries that we call "South", in order, precisely, to better understand the world in the making – a world in which the notions of identity, heritage, and nation are being revisited.

18 But allow me to circle back to my presence in this prestigious place and to my approach, which is anything but a renouncement of encounters. I would like to thank Antoine Compagnon for his unwavering commitment to the creation of this Chair, Administrator Alain Prochiantz who, in his introduction to the collective volume *Migrations, réfugiés, exil*, stressed that "Hospitality is a defining feature of our institution's policy [...]. We are not the Collège of a cowering France",[12] and Jean-Paul de Gaudemar of the Agence Universitaire Francophone. All of them understood that it was necessary to dust off the term "French-speaking world" by making the sharing of

French language and culture meaningful in our times. May this Chair modestly help to promote a decentralised and cross-cutting dynamic of research on these worlds.

19 Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

20 To speak of Haiti and its literature differently one needs to ask oneself, through the words of its writers, what light the Haitian experience can shed on the French-speaking world, and perhaps on the world at large, in this day and age: how a civilisation – and one of which literature would be a major element – was founded on the grounds of an almost unthinkable historical event, namely a victorious revolution carried out in the late eighteenth century by men and women taken from Africa to America and enslaved; how, in the impasse that followed this revolution, these dispossessed, displaced, linguistically destabilised men and women ceaselessly spoke and wrote of a dream of inhabiting, thus demonstrating that literature often begins where speech becomes impossible, where the world is so shaken that one must traverse language to find fragments of meaning in what René Depestre calls a "state of poetry":

> The state of poetry flourishes light years away from states of siege and alert. [...] The poetic state is the only known promontory from which, at any time of the day or night, one can discover with the naked eye the northern coast of tenderness. It is also the only state of life that allows one to walk barefoot over miles of embers and shards or to cross a raging strait on a shark's back.[13]

21 It is undoubtedly this meeting of the unthinkable and the impossible that has made this literature in the French language so special, if only in terms the number of texts produced. These classes will be part of what has always underpinned my work as a writer and my path of reflection: the conviction that history has never loosened the grip of urgency on the deportees that we were, and that literature has always conjured the realm of dreams to express the wish to live. My lectures at the École Normale Supérieure in Haiti on the literature of the Enlightenment afforded me the opportunity to study the leading French eighteenth-century authors and to discover not only the undeniable progress of this new understanding of the world, but also its contradictions and limitations, such as the silence that surrounded the Code Noir or the difficulty of "humanising Black people or territorialising Africa".[14]

22 The gathering that took place around the journal *Chemins critiques*, which was founded by a collective led by the anthropologist Laënnec Hurbon, and on the editorial board of which I sat, signified an important moment in Haitian and Caribbean thinking. At the same time, in *La Culture opprimée*, Jean Casimir was developing his fundamental concept of the historical and social division between Creoles, slaves or freedmen born and raised in the colony, and Bossales, slaves newly arrived from Africa – a concept that was taken up and judiciously amplified by Gérard Barthélemy in *L'Univers rural haïtien. Le Pays en dehors*. While philosophers, anthropologists and historians regularly explored issues specifically relevant to their disciplines, poet Georges Castera, writer Syto Cavé, other young poets and myself were raising questions concerning surrealism, indigenism, theatre, literature in Creole language and novels in Haiti, in the Caribbean and elsewhere. I would like to express my indebtedness to them, as well as to the late Jean-Claude Fignolé for his admirable work *Vœu de voyage et intention romanesque*, which had merit of complexifying the notion of inhabiting, in Haitian novels. Alongside the voices of Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon, we were already attentive to those of Édouard

Glissant, Fredric Jameson, Achille Mbembe and Edward Said. And my time on the board of directors of the Congrès International des Études Francophones, a North American organisation, in the late 1990s, allowed me to discover the remarkable openness of U.S. universities to all French-language literature. Finally, I must highlight the fruitful conversations some of us had on a regular basis at historian Michel Hector's home where, in the absence of a sophisticated research centre, we would ceaselessly examine and write the world, Haiti and ourselves in the shade of a big almond tree.

23 Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

24 I will try to make us drift towards that great black river which, for centuries, Europe caused to flow from Africa to the Americas.

25 I will call upon a certain inter-disciplinarity to grasp the construction of a literature from this transnational perspective that often presides over research on the Atlantic area. I will at times venture to decompartmentalise time, to make hypotheses that will bring together the unexpected of history and the unsuspected of literature, whose borders are now becoming blurry as texts and contexts become "narrative constructions", to borrow Antoine Compagnon's words.[15]

26 I will revisit this story in an exercise in which I will find myself both judge and judged, but with my hand outstretched for a journey that will lead us on the path of a shared memory. These French-speaking worlds will secure a foundation, and by the same token a future for themselves, only if they agree to dig up the past in order to shift the lines.

27 The year 1492 is an emblematic date in world history. Christopher Columbus reached Haiti on 5 December and named it "Hispaniola". The genocide and deportation that followed this first globalisation are known. In 1697, the Spanish ceded Santo Domingo to France after their defeat in Cartagena. This colony would soon eclipse all the others, owing to the eighteenth-century economic miracle: sugar. Slavery was the essential mode of exploitation for sugar production and the Caribbean became one of the most industrialised regions of the day. After France ceded Canada to England in 1763, the Caribbean became the main destination for French people who wanted to try their luck in America, and Saint-Domingue was the most attractive island in the region. At the same time, another commodity appeared and was an immediate success: coffee. On the eve of the French Revolution, Saint-Domingue was the world's largest producer of both sugar and coffee. It exported as much sugar as Jamaica, Cuba and Brazil combined, and half the world's coffee consumption, making it the centrepiece of the Atlantic slave system. France's wealth increased thanks to the sugar and coffee produced in the colonies. The importance of this accumulated wealth in the events of the 1789 Revolution should not be minimised. Jean Jaurès commented on it thus: "Sad irony of history! The fortunes created in Bordeaux and Nantes by the slave trade gave to the bourgeoisie that pride which demanded liberty and so contributed to human emancipation."[16]

28 The victorious revolt of the slaves of Saint-Domingue took the whole colonialist world by surprise, because this insurrectional movement was unthinkable and made a qualitative leap that initiated the North's misunderstanding of these parts of the world. Even though the American revolution represents undeniable progress of the

Enlightenment, because it fostered individual liberties, the practice of slavery outlived it by many decades. And while the French Revolution thrust human rights forward, France maintained slavery in some regions and reinforced the process of colonisation in others. The Haitian revolution on the other hand went beyond the project of the Enlightenment by radically advancing the issue of equality. And more recently, Laurent Dubois, an American historian from the Laboratory of Haitian Studies at Duke University in the United States, argued that "the impact of the Haitian Revolution [...] was a key part of the political, philosophical and cultural currents of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this sense, we are the descendants of those common ancestors who are the rebels of Saint-Domingue", those whom Cyril Lionel Robert James calls the "Black Jacobins".[17]

29 In this moment of epiphany that followed the Haitian revolution, the first Constitution would already enact another idea of universality, one that was not underpinned by a logic of similarity. In 1804, while "founding the common upon propriety" in order to constitute itself as a nation-state, Haiti managed to integrate the Other in a remarkable way. Defying the game of origins which, through the question of migration, is still to this day at play in the issue of identity in Europe and America. Thus including in the national "we" the Polish troops and Prussian soldiers who had disassociated themselves from Napoleon's army to join the indigenous army, casting away any consideration of origin, culture or phenotype.

30 The second novelty was a policy of hospitality, since anyone in the world who was fighting for freedom could find refuge in Haiti. In the nineteenth century the island welcomed Africans, Europeans, Black Americans and people from all over the Caribbean.

31 The third novelty was an active fraternity towards those who, in any part of the world, were fighting for their independence. Haiti welcomed Francisco de Miranda and then Simón Bolívar – helping the latter in his fight that led to the independence of five Latin American countries –, as well as the Cubans José Martí and Antonio Maceo. It also provided substantial support to Greece in 1824 and to Ethiopia at the end of the nineteenth century in their struggle for independence.

32 Haiti was the first country of the "Global South" spawned by the economic and political modernity stemming from the Enlightenment. It was the mould in which future and existent relations between North and South were cast. It was the first country to experience all the materialisations of these relations: an embargo from 1804 to 1820; a heavy debt paid in 1883 by loans that were not reimbursed until 1952, crippling the nation in its infancy; and the North's grip on its economy and politics with the complicity of local elites. This detour was long but essential to understand why urgency has always been with us and why writers have always pursued a dream of living in the world "on ground level and in broad daylight".[18] This is what, in words made fertile by their beauty and ambiguity, René Char calls the "health of misfortune".

33 Haiti's foundational literature began with François-Dominique Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Between 1767 and 1806, they produced texts that projected them into a post-colonial and post-slavery world. Following Daniel Desormeaux's critical edition of Toussaint Louverture's writings, Deborah Jenson, in her remarkable work *Beyond the Slave Narrative*,[19] brought parts of this impressive body of work out of French archives. These are neither texts testifying to the horrors of slavery nor the type of often second-hand autobiographies which chronicle them, such as those produced in British island colonies, but rather an unprecedented projection

into the future. Edward Said expressed the idea that it is always the Centre that structures the other, gives him life, represents him, animates him.[20] As early as the late eighteenth century, the writings of Toussaint Louverture and Dessalines expressed the desire to define oneself beyond all clichés, outside of those webs of representations, of the trap of all forms of racialisation. This epistemological inversion appropriated the Centre's ability to name things and reduced it either to repeating what was already known or to a form of silence before novelty, thus assigning it, in turn, to the role of the one who does not know, who no longer knows.

34 Some of both Toussaint's and Dessalines' addresses were published in journals in the United States, England and Germany. In her book *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*,[21] Susan Buck-Morss analyses all of their texts that were published in the journal *Minerva*, and critically examines the possible relationship between these texts and the genesis and conceptualisation of Hegel's dialectic of master and slave. A few years earlier, in *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*,[22] David Brion Davis also pointed this out in the chapter entitled "Toussaint Louverture and the Phenomenology of the Mind".

35 Toussaint, an officer in the French army, used the premises of Enlightenment thinking and the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to address Napoleon, among others: "One cannot give a person what he or she enjoys; General Leclerc cannot give the inhabitants of the colony a freedom that they had already received from God, which had been taken away from them by the injustice of their tyrants, and which they had to regain and preserve at the price of their blood." Dessalines took a more radical stance in declaring: "And if men who want to be free, because they can, are still known in France under the awful epithet of brigands, let it send back to fight them, if it can, the small number of French soldiers that our climate and our humanity have spared." Referring to Michelet, Patrick Boucheron highlighted in his inaugural lecture that "the Renaissance exists because he reinvented it. It exists in no other way than as poetic creation. In this sense it is indisputable. Very rarely does history as literature attain this degree of invulnerability".[23] By their very nature, their emotional charge, their prophetic character and their lyricism, the writings of Toussaint Louverture and Dessalines reinvented the Haitian revolution and thus became literary. With that same compelling irrefutability.

36 From 1804 onwards, those who had no choice but to live on these 27,7500 km^2 – an area barely larger than that of some of the *départements* of France – were called upon to invent themselves and to be inventive in this unknown, unimagined, unwanted place. Laënnec Hurbon emphasises that inhabitation as humans "taking charge of the world and taking care of themselves by themselves, cut off from transcendence, is the particularity of modernity from which the world could be dreamt of as habitable and man could think of himself as an inhabitant of this world. From Haiti, therefore, a new light can be shed on the issue of inhabitation, since it is one of the privileged places to put to the test [...] what constitutes modernity at its core. Because paradoxically for us, modernity is therefore the opposite of inhabitation, it is a difficult process, a 'disinhabitation', a shift in landscapes, a de-territorialisation".[24]

37 Writers answered that call by nurturing a dream of inhabiting a body that is no longer that of the "naked migrant", as Glissant so elegantly put it, a foundational place and time, as Herder proposes, a dream of inhabiting writing as a primary, original place in Heidegger's way; a place not simply of rootedness but of possible residence. Even when these dreams meet major obstacles, writers always learn to ride their falls to continue the journey:

If you happen to fall
Swiftly learn how to ride your fall
That your fall
Become a horse to continue
The journey[25]

38 "How can the slave take care of himself when he is everywhere a stranger and the act that enslaves him makes of him a stranger wherever he goes? No parentage, no name, no language, no religion. A stranger to his own body".[26] But, even when it is emancipated from slavery, the body, the first place of dwelling, keeps the memory of the hold, the huts, the branding iron, the master's gaze. A body defined as malleable and animalised or over-eroticised. A body that became a pretext for a whole phantasmagorical creation, a fantasy in which, precisely, "pathos escapes from its logos", as Ann Laura Stoler demonstrates.[27]

39 In addition to this primary difficulty was the political and social challenge of forming a community. A dual shift occurred when the settlers left, which resulted in two ways of occupying the territory. The majority group was composed of men and women newly arrived from Africa, from over twenty-four African ethnic groups. These people, called "Bossales", radically rejected the plantation system and the liberal and materialistic economic rationale underpinning it. Throughout the nineteenth century, an original culture was built, with its own coherence and in a certain isolation; for a long time, this rural world was dubbed the "country outside". As Michel Hector and Jean Casimir explained: "They rearranged both the traditions of African village societies and those of the European feudal societies with which they had been brought into contact. They gathered around the small property, invented a way of occupying the space of the hinterland, a form of matrimonial organisation, and consolidated a language, Creole, and a religion, voodoo."[28] This was a majority culture that would protect itself from the premises and developments of the neo-colonial project of the new State, right down to individual bodies, and which, in the imaginary dimensions of the sacred, visited by the gods, sought to escape from any biopolitics that might govern them.

40 The other group, a small minority called "the Creoles", had a worldview more aligned with the values of the Western world. The colonial legacy preserved a form of organisation and occupation of space revolving around port cities, centres of trade and of foreign dependence. They assumed the heritage of the French language, the Catholic religion and a state-centred mode of organisation – one in which, as Jean Casimir points out, the existence of the Bossales was neither conceivable nor desirable. For more than a century and a half, our French-language literature came from the crucible of Creole culture.

41 Since the early nineteenth century, these two cultures have existed side by side and defined themselves in relation to each other. Through one of history's old ruses, voodoo, the Creole language and Haitian popular culture, on which the endeavour to deny humanity had come down with the most violence, have appropriated elements of French language and culture. Part of the voodoo cosmogony from Africa echoes the Catholic cosmogony, and every religious service begins with prayers in French from the Catholic liturgy, with even some influence of Freemasonry. Finally, all one has to do is read the *Memoirs of a Breton Peasant* or skim through *Les Légendes fantastiques charentaises et gabayes* to discover, among other things, common beliefs in *simples* or *galipotes*. For a long time, this appropriation by the Bossales took place in relative isolation, without the feeling of alienation that comes from the gaze of the Other, whose recognition is sought. By thus avoiding being torn between identities, as were the Creoles – and as

Fanon described in *Black Skin, White Masks* – this appropriation participated in the dynamics of any civilisation that lets itself be traversed by otherness in order to constitute itself.

42 In Haiti, we have yet to overcome the Bossales/Creoles cleavage, which bears witness to a clear continuity of the colonial world. On this difference, we have created our own shadows. And because of them we must, as Jean Métellus rightly says,[29] consider lyricism and never hesitate to look at these shadows that are ours, in order to relentlessly carry out this internal decolonisation work.

43 On top of the difficulties of inhabiting this body and of forming a community comes that of language. Literature written in French is still that of a minority. Deleuze and Guattari said of Kafka's oeuvre that it belongs to a minor literature: "A minor literature does not come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language. But the first characteristic of minor literature in any case is that, within it, language is affected by a high coefficient of de-territorialisation. In this sense, Kafka marks the impasse that makes writing impossible: impossible not to write, impossible not to write in German, and impossible to write differently".[30] Young Haitian literature faces these same three impossibilities: impossible not to write because the uncertain, oppressed national consciousness necessarily passes through literature; impossible to write otherwise than in French, in this language that is cut off from the masses, like an artificial paper tongue; and impossible to refrain from writing to say that which only literature could convey.

44 The very low level of schooling in Haiti's early days as a nation did not prevent its first writers from wanting to make a mark. In 1814, playwright and brilliant essayist De Vastey published a remarkably topical text, *The Colonial System Unveiled*, which did not keep him from declaring in 1820:

> It is not futile for me to warn my readers that I have never made a particular study of the French language, they will excuse the errors of speech and literature which must necessarily abound in the works of an islander who has never had any other masters than his books and the hatred of tyrants.[31]

45 Note that, although the Code Noir prohibited slaves from benefitting from any form of education during the colonial period, as Jean Fouchard highlights in *Les Marrons du syllabaire*,[32] from the early nineteenth century there was an embryo of institutionalisation of the written word with the establishment of a few schools, the creation of journals in all major cities – the first of which, *L'Abeille haytienne*, dates back to 1817 –, groups of writers and a theatrical life. These maintained a sound tradition inherited from the colonial era, as Georges Corvington described in *Port-au-Prince over the years*.[33] Délide Joseph meticulously analysed the genesis and structuring of this elite in her recent book *L'État haïtien et ses intellectuels.*[34]

46 Literature written in French is therefore that of a tiny minority called upon to write in order to articulate a "we" capable of founding a community of citizens. The exaltation of the epic of Independence and the warning against a possible return of the French characterises all early Haitian poetry:

If some day, on your shores
Our tyrants resurge
Let their fugitive hordes
Fertilise our fields[35]

47 But in Haiti, literature is also the place where the human value of this first Black community in the New World must be attested, faced with the Western world from which it is cut off and which strives to assert the opposite. These pioneering writers intensely inhabited the imaginary territory of history, saturating it with meaning to augment its facts. They also dwelled in it poetically.

48 It is to thwart this difficulty of inhabitation that Henri Christophe built the imposing Laferrière citadel in the northern kingdom so as to tangibly magnify the act of independence, and that he created an academy of fine arts to capitalise on the power of artistic creation. The first historians, such as Thomas Madiou, Joseph Saint-Remy or Beaubrun Ardouin, were also acutely aware of the exceptional character of the Haitian revolution and had a pressing concern to leave traces of it. Later, theorists like Louis-Joseph Janvier and Hannibal Price would strive to defend Haiti against its many detractors in France, or to write some of the first argumentative anti-racist works of the modern era, as did Anténor Firmin with *The Equality of Human Races*, in response to Arthur de Gobineau's famous *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races.*

49 But in producing this theoretical and literary writ, authors could not avoid mimicking their only model, French literature, thus setting it in a mental space they meant to proscribe. Although critical works produced in the twentieth century and shaped by indigenism and negritude have always frowned upon this body of texts, philosopher Homi K. Bhabha recently analysed postcolonial mimicry as an epistemological advantage in its potential to destroy the globalised and trans-historical image of slaves or of Black people.[36]

50 These literary or theoretical writings were however mostly produced for the outside world, as the emerging nation state needed these voices to try to impose itself on the international scene and to assert its legitimacy. Many writers published in French journals, formed friendships with writers such as Victor Hugo or Lamartine, and exchanged with them through Haitian and French journals. But, as early as 1836, some of them, like the Nau brothers and Oswald Durand, felt the need to turn their gaze inward and thus to express a budding desire to free themselves from mimicry. Emphasis was placed on national reference frameworks. They thus initiated a shift from literature as a convenient instrument of affirmation for the outside world, to a literature that became the setting for a pre-existing national reality:

I would like to bite into it as I would do
Mahogany apples from the roads of the plain
I recognised in the gentleness which dresses
The delicate velvety softness of your cheek
The pink apple[37]

51 But what could a dream of inhabiting be for this French-speaking elite whose attention was turned towards France? This change of perspective gradually exposed the fundamental wound, the immense cultural and social fault line, the difficulty in creating a national "we". Had the first writers not often hidden this rift, in spite of themselves? In the following period, the novelists of *La Ronde* set out to describe the social reality of the island without indulgence, in the manner of Balzac or Stendhal. Antoine Innocent brought to light voodoo, which the elite had done so much to discredit, and Justin Lhérisson used expressions from the Creole language, digging the

first breach in the sacrosanct edifice of the French language and thus attempting to bridge this gap and this "separation of languages [which], as Léon Laleau expresses it, is a mourning":

> Do you feel the pain
> And the anguish with no equal,
> In taming with words from France
> This heart of mine from Senegal.[38]

52 But, starting in the second half of the nineteenth century, some writers also felt stifled by this injunction to speak for a communal "we", and set their novels outside Haiti. Jean Demesvar Delorme was one of them. Others, like Coriolan Ardouin or Etzer Vilaire, chose to focus on the intimate rift in themselves rather than on that of the community. They thus preferred the condition of the writer, as the figure par excellence of Western modernity – and therefore as an individual vested with prestige – to immersion in this collective "we". These writers guarded us against the pitfalls of nationalist exaltation in literature.

53 To build this socio-political world to inhabit, most writers became involved in politics. Here, the literary field did not constitute itself in opposition to the political field; on the contrary, it tended to integrate itself into it for a long time. In addition to efforts to aestheticise the history of the country's foundation, there was also an aestheticisation of politics. A long series of exiles thus punctuated the literary and political history of Haiti until the massive wave of the 1960s during Duvalier's dictatorship. The question of leaving or staying has always gnawed at writers and intellectuals. As Jean-Claude Fignolé so rightly pointed out, "the term 'desertion' marks out more than one itinerary".[39] From the mid-nineteenth century, the difficulty of the "we", the risks of political action, the need to say "I" and the constant pull of the North as a safer, freer space, would configure this constant oscillation between anchoring and fleeing, this syndrome of departure, this impossibility of inhabitation, as a place of the imagination.

54 From the end of the U.S. occupation to the early 1960s, three decades of exceptional literary, cultural and artistic creation unfolded. The relationship to literature and the dream of inhabiting underwent major changes. This was a key period that shed light on the path we had travelled up till then and outlined what followed. While the American occupation in 1915 marked the end of Haiti's nineteenth century, it also corresponded to a regional hegemonic policy that would give Haitian writers a broader sense of belonging. The upper-class youth, who were already cosmopolitan to begin with, were exposed in Europe to Black aesthetics and to Apollinaire's new spirit. They read René Maran and Blaise Cendrars, saw a young Josephine Baker dance, admired the first objects brought back from Africa and their influence on European artists such as Picasso, and heard echoes of the Harlem Renaissance movement. Back in Haiti, some writers – Jacques Roumain, Émile Roumer, Philippe Thoby-Marcelin, Carl Brouard – gathered around *La Revue indigène*, approached Latin American literary movements, and discovered futurism, the modernism that was in vogue in the region, while affirming an attachment to the French language as a rampart against the American occupier.

55 Contrary to what its name might suggest, indigenism was not an exaltation of national culture. It was an innovative attempt at making literature an experimental object, to re-appropriate the French language in a more assertive way and to extend the "we" beyond the national territory. Internal social changes had led members of new, more

modest strata to seek the spotlight on the cultural, literary and political scene. Jean Price-Mars was their most emblematic representative. Their elder by ten years, he too returned from France, where he had developed a passion for the work of the first ethnologists, and had met actors of the Harlem Renaissance movement and the youth who revolved around *La Revue du monde noir* – Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Léon Damas – and who had begun to make the voice of negritude heard. Price-Mars' book *So Spoke the Uncle*, published in 1929, is unquestionably one of the first ethnological descriptions of Haiti and Africa by a Black author. In theorising the Haitian national "we", Price-Mars inevitably put his finger on its fundamental rift and, in so doing, pointed to the unavoidable flaws of the postcolonial states that would emerge in the 1960s. As Senghor said of Price-Mars: "There are names that sound like a manifesto. One such name was that of Dr. Jean Price-Mars when I first heard it. [...] And I read *So Spoke the Uncle* in a single sitting, like one drinks water from a tank in the evening, after a long journey in the desert. I was content. The uncle legitimised the reasons for my quest".[40] He was unanimously appointed to preside over the First Congress of Black Writers and Artists in France in 1956. Roumain, who was also interested in these questions, was Jacques Rivet's assistant at the Musée de l'Homme during one of his exiles, before collaborating with Price-Mars upon his return to Haiti. In 1941 he founded the National Bureau of Ethnology, where he began the first archaeological excavations in search of Native American remains, finding in the evocation of Africa a source of inspiration that shed light on the national "we":

> Mandingo Arada Bambara Ibo
> Moaning chants, choked by iron collars
> and when we reached the coast
> Bambara Ibo
> out of all of us
> the Bambara Ibo grain
> hardly a fistful was left
> in the hands of the sower of death[41]

56 In the wake of Price-Mars, writers and theorists grouped around the magazine *Les Griots* claimed their belonging to a negritude in which the evocation of Africa indirectly reflected that of the Haitian rural masses. Thus, their discourse was primarily addressed to the Creole and mulatto elite. "Since then, all that is authentically indigenous – language, customs, sentiments, beliefs – have become suspect, tarnished by bad taste in the eyes of the elite [...] with very strong reason the word *Negro*".[42] Along with Jean Price-Mars, Suzanne Comhaire-Sylvain was the first ethnologist to strive, in addition to fieldwork, to compile and describe oral literature in Creole language.

57 Jacques Roumain founded the Haitian Communist Party in 1937. Marxism eventually superseded his negritude-infused indigenism as a means to express the dream of this common socio-political "we", that he then stretched out to embrace the "we" of the Socialist International. In *Gouverneurs de la rosée*, a great novel of Haitian land, his talent allowed political commitment to meet indigenism, but above all he subverted the French language, mixing it with Creole, and invented his own language, his creolity, in 1944. As a poet, he simultaneously inhabited a dream, the world and his own intimate language.

58 A few years earlier, Clément Magloire-Saint-Aude drove literature towards silence, a space he roamed to the point of vertigo. This intimate quest enthralled him. He deliberately placed himself out of time and out of the frame. Far from ethnicity or class,

far ahead of the impossible. Towards that moment when the voice loses its origin, when the author enters his own death and where writing begins:

> From my emotion to the sentences,
> My handkerchief for my lamps.
> Cowering in my faded eyes
> The pain, the poem apart from the causes[43]
> For a silence made of white salt, like
> A bowl[44]

59 Saint-Aude posited literature's function in a totally radical way, dissociating the writer from the one who enunciates and shifting inhabitation of the world to inhabitation of literature, to poetry as the primary place of dwelling, as Heidegger suggested: "Poetry is the source of inhabitation-making... Poetry edifies the being of dwelling."[45]

60 Roumain and Saint-Aude were two great figures who heralded an extraordinary period in Haitian literature, a time when it seemed possible to overcome impossibilities – the impossibilities of inhabiting a body to which negritude had finally given value, and of forming a community through the socialist dream and the timid introduction of popular culture. Overcoming the impossibility too of language, through the discovery of literature's primarily verbal condition. As Haiti became a place where, at last, it was possible to dwell, writers experienced a hitherto unknown state of exaltation.

61 From the end of the 1930s until the Second World War, Haiti positioned itself as a radiating and absorbent cultural focal point. In *Avant que les ombres s'effacent*, Louis-Philippe Dalembert recounted how the island welcomed Jews fleeing Nazism. Many writers, intellectuals and artists, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, the black American writers Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes, or Katherine Dunham and Maya Deren, also sojourned on the island. There, Cuban author Alejo Carpentier drew inspiration for his novel *The Kingdom of this World* and essential elements for his reflection on the aesthetics of magical realism. Aimé Césaire gave lectures in its high schools, imagined early Haiti's king in *The Tragedy of King Christophe* and attempted to discern the outstanding historical figure of Toussaint Louverture in an essay. Inspired by this effervescence in the arts, Wifredo Lam found inspiration for his painting *The Jungle* (1943). When, in 1946, France decided to create the Institut Français de Port-au-Prince and, on Pierre Mabille's invitation, André Breton made his first and only trip there, the writer was surprised to find a country where literary creation in French was very much alive. It was also a time of great political turmoil. Depestre, an unruly poet, founded the magazine *La Ruche* with Jacques Stephen Alexis and Gerald Bloncourt. He was just 19 years old when he published his first collection of poems – and was jailed a month later. It was from this bubbling heart of Haiti, where they were born and had always lived, that Tony Bloncourt, shot on Mont-Valérien in March 1942, and Philippe Kieffer, who engaged in the decisive battle of the casino of Ouistreham in Normandy in June 1944, were gone.

62 Popular culture, whose visibility is now asserted, was beginning to impose its powerful coherence in music, painting and dance, thanks largely to the Universal Exhibition in Port-au-Prince. The Art Centre became the crucible from which a considerable portion of the production of naive painters was born, while those of the Foyer des Arts Plastiques claimed their right to a pictorial expression that was not marked by ethnicity, so as to avoid being diverted and confined to stale exoticism. Classical music composers such as Frantz Casseus, Werner Jaegerhuber and Ludovic Lamothe refused this same imposed aesthetic.

63 The introduction of the working classes and their culture to the arts scene in the second half of the century brought about radical changes within a new awareness of the community and proximity of the two national languages. The choice of French, the exclusive prerogative of the elites, uncontaminated by popular culture, was clearly untenable. In the 1950s, as a response to provocations from those who thought Creole unable to be the vessel of a highly literary writ, Félix Morisseau-Leroy wrote his *Antigone* in Creole. He was part of a current that originated in the colony, came out of the shadows and has permeated Haitian literary creation ever since. Through this symbolic step forward, these writers rightly felt that they were splitting away from the supposed extraterritoriality of language. This dream of inhabiting a common language would nevertheless come up against the inability to reach a Creole-speaking public, which was still uneducated and maintained in orality.

64 At the end of the 1950s, Anthony Phelps, Roland Morisseau, Davertige, Serge Legagneur, René Philoctète and Jean-Richard Laforest formed the group Haïti littéraire. In the only three issues of their journal *Semences* and in the magazine *Rond-Point*, they took the quest for the truth of literature, which cannot exist outside of it, to unprecedented bounds. Like Saint-Aude, Davertige refused to submit his poetry to the injunction of ethnicity or politics, and he first and most openly expressed his desire to leave for somewhere far away. Very far away from the homeland. His relationship with poetry was ontological. Reference frameworks bored him. He abolished borders, names, places. He sometimes renounced hermeticism, the last level of modesty, and delivered a poetry too legible for his taste, as in the poem "Pétion-Ville en blanc et noir" ("Pétion-Ville in white and black"), where he evoked a humble protector who took him in at a difficult time:

> The house, that shed where we would stay during the day
> The coal in the irons burned both childhood and history
> The house filled every head with smoke
> The smell of starch and ash lye
> Swelled by our hair their wild bubbles
> In the fields of thunderstorms rose rain grass
> I remember and will remember
> For the black boat of its heart the diluted indigo turned its lakes[46]

65 It took a long time for Marie Vieux-Chauvet to be recognised as part of the circle of poets of literary Haiti. A few years later, she would be the first to break the codes of the traditional novel and to place herself outside the political doxa, inaugurating the novel as a space of complexity. Her influence on this literary genre is indisputable.

66 Before his tragic death at the age of 35, Jacques Stephen Alexis published an essay, *Prolégomènes pour un réalisme merveilleux des Haïtiens* (*Prolegomena to a Manifesto of the Marvellous Realism of Haitians*), and four major novels, in the last of which, *L'Espace d'un cillement*, he distanced himself from socialist realism and affirmed both a great freedom of tone and his place in the Caribbean. Depestre pursued a career as a poet, novelist and essayist, and refused all forms of political, ideological or aesthetic confinement.

67 Jacques Stephen Alexis, René Depestre, the poets of literary Haiti, Marie Vieux-Chauvet and Félix Morisseau-Leroy consolidated the schism initiated by Roumain and Saint-Aude as they too left a very clear distinction between the before and after. As early as the 1960s, Duvalier's dictatorship extended and translated the intellectual "noirism" articulated by the journal *Les Griots* into a tyranny, driving away many intellectuals and writers. In the three spaces where they went into exile, they would operate an

unprecedented South/South and South/North transversality of French-speaking worlds.

68 France has already seen three successive generations, that of René Depestre, Jean Métellus, who is sorely missed, and Gérald Bloncourt, that of Louis-Philippe Dalembert, and a third is now on the rise with James Noël, Makenzy Orcel, Marvin Victor and Néhémy Pierre-Dahomey. The first contributed in shaping the generation of Independences in Africa with, among others, Gérard Chenet, Roger Dorsinville and Jean Brierre on the one hand, and on the other hand, the generation that settled in Canada and took part in the Quiet Revolution, inaugurating an unprecedented cross-pollinisation between different French-speaking worlds. Two generations of writers, those of Haïti littéraire and those of Dany Laferrière, Marie-Célie Agnant, Joël Des Rosiers and Stanley Péan, left their mark on the literature of their host country, Canada. They found themselves in tune with the thinking of Quebecois writers, who were also in a situation of cultural and linguistic minority, on the ways of inhabiting the imaginary territory of literature. They attempted to provide new answers to the question of identity and its relationship to literature by complexifying it. Émile Ollivier claimed to be "Canadian by day and Haitian by night". Writers of the diaspora thus found themselves propelled into a pluralism of belonging without having fulfilled the dream of inhabiting, filling this foundational gap in their communities of origin at a time when the relevance of the concept of nation was called into question. Literature was presented as an answer or a substitute to this fragmentation of inhabitation with Ferdinand, a character from Jean-Claude Charles' *Manhattan Blues* whose only nationality was to be a writer, even in the form of the ironic inversion in Dany Laferrière's *I Am a Japanese Writer*. The former broke the traditional codes of the essay in *Le Corps Noir*, and both of them breathed a taste of freedom into Haitian novels.

69 Those who remained inside the country, like Frankétienne and Jean-Claude Fignolé, or returned, like René Philoctète, bare-handedly faced the dictatorship and learned to "communicate in signs". The spiralism they invented was an aesthetic urgency before the threat of dying with their eyes gouged out and tongues cut out. The poetry and novels of Frankétienne, the poetry of Philoctète, and the novels of Fignolé explore this literature in its struggle with the spiral of forced silence. Beyond the uninterrupted search for the writer's place in his community, Frankétienne's theatre and his novel *Dezafi*, one of the first to be written in Creole, as well as Georges Castera's collection *Konbelann*, marked the beginning of the Creole language's written literality.

70 They also testify to the power of motionless travel. Writers from the South are not stranded in their homeland. "Tired of sudden downpours from the North", René Philoctète returned to "these islands that graze the azure at the limits of their vertigo". [47] While forced departure is a suffering and the desired journey a free act, to give in to the dictatorship of "globalitarism", so rightly decried by Paul Virilio, is to attest that a writer who stays in the home country is a dead writer. Inhabitation is neither a calling to foreign lands nor a confining order to the here.

71 A new generation of poets and novelists was born in the mid-1980s. Pierre Clitandre wrote his novel *Cathedral of August Heat*, and Michel Soukar *La Cour des miracles*. Lyonel Trouillot, who, with Pierre-Richard Narcisse, published the anthology of poetry *Depale* in Creole and a novel, *Les Fous de Saint-Antoine*, launched a far-sighted creative movement, just as Gary Victor did with *Sonson Pipirit*, to name only the most emblematic. Rodney Saint-Éloi, a young poet, also ventured successfully into publishing. Yanick Jean, a major poetess of these pivotal years, voiced her singularity,

going against the current of the day, in the wake of searchers of silence and the unknown, such as Saint-Aude and Davertige:

> Who carries her lamp and chains herself to the nights with her fences, washed in the moods of the altered moons, delivered from childhood to abduction and rigor?[48]

72 Critics, and even some writers themselves, have described poetry written until the late 1990s as having an aesthetic of decay and disenchantment, despite the fall of the dictatorship in 1986. The infuriating hope that makes one shed tears of rage has faded and the Duvalierist dictatorship, which was infused with *noirism*, has shown that any narrow dream of community, language, ethnicity or class leads to a path of blood. These generations find themselves in the midst of a new storm, gnawed by the same dreams of living together as a community, but they are now informed and above all heirs to a literature that has also been able to say, with the poet Georges Castera, that above all,

> words choose us
> because we're alone
> bread itself
> is the glaring truth
> of a lack[49]

73 With the fall of the dictatorship in 1986 it became apparent that, while literature could not be gendered, female authors – such as Jan J. Dominique, Évelyne Trouillot, Kettly Mars, Emmelie Prophète, Sybille Claude, Saika Céus, Martine Fidèle and Marie-Alice Théard in Haiti, Marie-Célie Agnant and Stéphane Martelly in Canada, and Edwidge Danticat and Roxane Gay in the United States – could invite us to critically examine the so-called "feminine" identity and to discover other ways of inhabiting our body, community or language. Where race, class and gender meet, inter-sectionality has taught us to break out of representations that are too narrow to name a diversity of women. In describing for the first time from the inside an initiatory experience in voodoo by a priestess, Mimerose Beaubrun's *Nan dòmi* reveals not only a dimension of experience that inter-sectionality does not take into account, but also one of the places of women's power in popular culture.

74 The unearthing of Marie Vieux-Chauvet's oeuvre from 1986 onwards was part of a new revival of the feminist movement of the 1930s and a recognition of female historical figures such as Sanité Belair and Victoria Montou; or figures of intellectual life, such as the three Sylvain sisters; of political life, such as Yvonne Hakim-Rimpel; or of literary life, such as Cléante Valcin, Annie Desroy, Nadine Magloire and Marie-Thérèse Colimon.

75 So far, many young writers, such as Mehdi Chalmers, Kermonde Lovely Fifi or Coutechève Lavoie Aupont, have written exclusively in French, but many of them augur a new relationship with French and with Creole. There is no need to inhabit the Creole language in the social and political voluntarism of recent years. Moreover, the introduction of Creole in elementary schooling and its gradual recognition in society put them in a less frontline position in their struggle for this language, and they write in French without feeling the guilt that their elders felt. I am talking about Bonel Auguste and Inéma Thursday in particular. Today, book fairs, the publication of quality journals, the revival of publishers and the existence of a theatre scene in both languages with, among others, Jean-René Lemoine in French, and Syto Cavé, Guy Régis

Junior and Faubert Bolivar, testify to the vitality of those who, as Jean Starobinski points out, resist everything that "represses the song's arising".[50]

76 Finally, Haitian literature, thanks to migration, is now being produced in two other languages of North America: English and Spanish. While the question of a more open identity was raised by first-generation writers, women were the first to take the leap by writing in a language other than French or Creole – Edwidge Danticat in English and Micheline Dusseck in Spanish –, perhaps indicating thereby a relationship to identity and language that differs from the one defined by patriarchy. This literature in four languages invites the French language to coexist with other idioms without any exclusivity, and the French-speaking worlds to rethink the notions of identity, heritage and national language, not according to the criteria of the nineteenth century, but according to those that define a certain culture of the twenty-first century. In this changing world, languages can no longer have a single homeland, a single flag.

77 Today we are facing the same challenges, presented by the same forces. And the last earthquake, which claimed so many lives on 12 January 2010, reminded us that, in addition to the dice of history, chance placed us on a seismic fault line and on the path of hurricanes, and therefore in constant familiarity with the worst, in phase with the awareness of a vulnerability that has become global. Beyond an aesthetics of decay, disenchantment or disaster, writers obstinately and quietly inhabit this time when hope is no longer a reliable answer; only the urgency of the here and now of beauty continues to be one. With the poet Davertige, it ignites in the heart of darkness those sparks of the unknown of the world, where:

> In the fields of storms the grass of the rain [rises], there where
> For the black boat of a heart, the diluted indigo [stirs] its lakes.

FOOTNOTES

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