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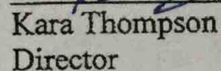
"Istwa Sa A Pa Senp": Body, Land, And Family In Haitian Afrofuturist Fiction

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies from
The College of William and Mary

by

Sora Grace Edwards-Thro

Accepted for Highest Honors
(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)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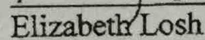
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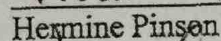
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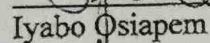
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Williamsburg, VA
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One possible translation of this project's title is "this is not a single story." In addition to myself, eleven Haitian and Haitian-American authors contributed words to this work in the form of short Afrofuturist fiction stories that they wrote and edited over the course of six months. The process began with two weekend workshops, one in Miami and the other in Port-au-Prince, in which we gathered to discuss genre, view movie clips, and review readings. While they went on to write their pieces as individuals, writers continued to collaborate by commenting on each other's rough drafts and reviewing each other's submissions as a committee. We kept in touch with one another through a groupchat, Facebook group, and email, and I was able to visit Port-au-Prince a second time to meet in person with some of the writers for a final review of the project stories. Throughout, I facilitated discussions while also providing my own input. This paper contains an analysis of their eleven original works, and we are currently at work on publishing their pieces as a collection that will be available to the public in both Haiti and internationally.

One of the most rewarding and frustrating aspects of this project has been responding to casual inquiries about what I am working on. When curious Americans hear "Haitian science fiction," my go-to shorthand, they often give me personal credit for coming up with it. Not interested in capitalizing on their misconceptions, I try to use these moments to correct assumptions that Haitians are too poor, or too primitive, to imagine the future. I explain that instead we should always question deficit narratives.

Now that *Black Panther* has come out, I have switched to sometimes saying "Afrofuturism." Seeing this term be increasingly met with nods rather than blank stares taught me the importance of classifications that accurately capture works, enabling us to converse about them. At the same time, I was wary of pigeon-holing works by categorizing them as Afrofuturist

rather than sci-fi or speculative. Furthermore, Americans are not this project's only or even primary audience. Thus, the first stage of my work was simply getting a grasp of how my writer-participants and their potential Haitian readers already talk about genre.

Haiti is by no means isolated from international media, including sci-fi and fantasy content. While access to these imports is imperfect, few people are completely cut off. The Internet is often not fast enough for streaming, but DVDs abound and movies often screen on local television channels. Even in a rural area with unreliable electricity,[1] a group of teenage boys was unimpressed with the collection of titles on my hard drive because they had already seen them all. On another occasion, the title *Killdozer!* jumped out at me from the books a vendor had spread out on the sidewalk. Assuming it was just another absurd second-hand object that had made its way to Haiti,[2] I picked it up and realized it was a translation of a Theodore Sturgeon story that I had bought myself at a San Francisco independent bookstore. However, using these foreign products as an entry point for discussing science fiction with Haitians risks portraying it as something that Haitians do not do themselves.

At the beginning of my research, I went to the Haitian National Library and asked for science fiction books by local authors. A librarian told me he had never had anyone request them before. Merely having materials is not enough; we must also train librarians on where to shelve books, publishers on what to print on the cover, and readers on what to ask for. We also have to acknowledge that only an elite few will ever set foot in the national institution; education needs to go beyond the capital. Here, language becomes especially relevant: French texts are not accessible to ninety percent of Haitians (Dejean 201). This thesis does not enter into reaching

[1] However, the fact that they had electricity at all sets them apart from even more isolated areas.
[2] My personal favorite: an "Ass: The Other Vagina" T-shirt.

readers, but it has been embedded in our work from the beginning, manifested in our commitment to writing in Haitian Creole and finding a Haitian Creole label to describe our work.

The librarian returned a few minutes later with a single book: *Rodhus 57AX: Tolérance Zéro* by Jean-Baptiste Schiller. It looked promising – a space opera in which characters still practice Vodou – but I refused to believe it was the only one of its kind. I tried to clarify that I would also welcome soft sci-fi; spaceships were not required.[3] The assistant retreated into the stacks and emerged with a few more titles, including another work by Schiller, *Et Si On Envahissait Les U.S.A.?* ("And What If We Were To Invade The U.S.?"). "This one doesn't have much technology in it," he apologized. In fact, the book qualified as "black militant near-future fiction." Kali Tal's paper defining the sub-genre includes an anecdote about Theodore Sturgeon assigning him an essay on why black people do not write science fiction (65). As Nisi Shawl points out, "the claim that black people do not write science fiction is dependent upon defining science fiction as texts that black people do not write" (xv). In addition to depriving authors of a potential audience, limited definitions narrow the material available to fans. Trying to transcend tropes and capture the essence of what I personally look for when I read science fiction, I started using the alliterative triad "anticipatory," "alternative," or "artificial." That last term then raised questions about the divisions between artificial, natural, and supernatural. The "science" in "science fiction" itself became a convention to challenge.

Through discussions with participants about Haitian author Gary Victor's work especially, I came to understand phenomena that cannot be explained by Western science as their

[3] See Dubey 32 for a discussion on how this division echoes the gendered split between "hard", masculine science and "soft", feminine fantasy.

own sort of technology. I briefly began adding "and fantasy"[4] to my English-language description of the project, but I became concerned about its implications of unreality; the same problems came up with the umbrella term "speculative fiction." While horror stories especially can incorporate religious phenomena without marking them as made-up, audiences do not perceive all spiritual systems equally. Christian concepts can be written about without ridiculing their believers, but Vodou and those who practice it are often exoticized. Ultimately, we chose the Haitian Creole word *mistik*[5] to respectfully describe stories rooted in believed realities.

Just as calling *mistik* magic is a mistake because *mistik* aligns with lived experiences, labeling dystopic scenarios "science fiction" can falsely imply that no one actually experiences them. In fact, writers and readers are using these narratives as a tool for making sense of their lives. One workshop participant compared the 2010 earthquake to "a Hollywood movie." Another spoke of the everyday perils of living as a person of color in the U.S.: "I tell my mom I love her before I leave for the supermarket, because you never know what will happen." Mark Dery, the man who coined the term Afrofuturism, describes the African diaspora as "descendants of alien abductees" (8). He recognizes that members of this group are uniquely equipped to take up what we might call science fiction or fantasy storylines both because they have already lived through them and because they have a pressing need to picture a different future. Claiming the term Afrofuturism does not so much set these stories apart from "mainstream" science fiction or literary fiction as specify a perspective.[6]

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[4] Other words did not completely fit based on their specific contexts and values. While "magical realism" is frequently applied to works by Latin American authors, Haitians seemed more familiar with the French-derived "surrealism." We came to reject both because they seemed to speak more to the aesthetics of a piece than its content.

[5] On the Anglophone Caribbean and African-American side, Nalo Hopkinson uses "mojo" (*Mojo*, Editor's Note). The closest scholarly equivalent may be "marvelous realism" (Glover, *Haiti Unbound*, 57).

[6] Outside the context of the African diaspora, it is possible to define stories by their internal and expository ends – supporting the status quo or revolution – rather than their plot devices – tech or magic. Ayodele Arigbabu's *Lagos 2060* challenges its authors to envision the Nigerian capital a century after independence. Hopkinson's *So Long Been Dreaming* celebrates an "unholy marriage of race consciousness and science fiction sensibility" (7). *Octavia's Brood*

The Haitian Creole equivalent of "Afrofuturist" would be *afrofitiris*.[7] Hesitant about introducing a new word to the lexicon, I often use "teknoloji ak bagay *mistik*" ("technology and *mistik* things") to describe this project instead. However, we define categories by putting them into action. Edwidge Danticat published first a collection of original Haitian *noir* pieces[8] and then an anthology compiling classic examples[9] to demonstrate that these works existed before there was a label for them. Sheree Renée Thomas includes old and new pieces in her black speculative fiction collections,[10] noting, "it is the light, not the matter, that is missing" (*Century*, x). Their efforts empowered me to go about generating new *afrofitiris* content with writers while still asserting that *afrofitiris* fiction is nothing new within or outside of Haiti.

Writers came into the project with varying levels of previous experience with speculative fiction. The Port-au-Prince group[11] included a movie buff, a professor who teaches an entire course on Gary Victor stories, and someone who was working on a *mistik* novel, but otherwise no one identified as a writer in that vein. With a publisher who had put together a Haitian horror anthology, an author who had published folktales and a *noir* piece, and someone who was already at work on the story they eventually submitted for this project, the Miami triad[12] was more familiar with the speculative. The workshops ensured that everyone had some exposure to Afrofuturism as we collectively defined it, even as I emphasized writers should not feel limited

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identifies itself as "visionary fiction" that strives to depict more just worlds (Walidah, n.p.). However, I did not want to restrict the works in this project to optimistic portrayals, and my writer-participants agreed that "postcolonial", when used as an umbrella term, can gloss over differences between the struggles of indigenous people and members of a diaspora.

[7] Although this term is not in current usage in Haiti, its constituent parts are: "afro" and "fiti" both have meaning. In contrast, *syans fiksyon* does not make sense without more context; one schoolteacher misinterpreted *fiksyon* as having something to do with the gaze, since in Haitian Creole *fikse* refers to staring at something intently.

[8] Danticat, *Haiti Noir*.

[9] Danticat, *Haiti Noir 2: The Classics*.

[10] Thomas, *Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction* and *Dark Matter: Reading The Bones*.

[11] A linguist myself by training, I recruited most Haitian writers from the Faculté Linguistique Appliquée. Special thanks to Michel DeGraff for recommending them.

[12] Special thanks to Edwidge Danticat for putting me in touch with the Miami Book Fair, who should also be thanked for organizing our Miami workshop.

to writing something similar to the content presented there.[13] Continued exchanges between writers after the workshops also shaped their understanding of what Afrofuturism might consist of in their context.

In making sense of this project's eleven *afrofitiris* pieces, I also want to connect them to Afrofuturism in a broader sense. To that end, I sought out Afrofuturist stories as part of my research process.[14] Early on in the course of these readings and viewings, I noticed similar motifs cropping up across works and started marking whenever one made an appearance. The process of transcribing these notes, flipping pages and channeling the author's words back through my fingertips, helped make patterns even more apparent. I relived the workshop materials especially multiple times: during the workshops themselves, but also over the course of scanning, printing, translating, selecting excerpts or scenes, embedding subtitles, and preparing questions for and about them. All these returns allowed me to constantly reflect on what I was drawing from the content.[15] While this thesis's focus is on the stories that emerged from the workshops, I draw connections to these supplementary readings, especially those we discussed during the workshops, throughout. Furthermore, in my analysis, I employ a framework that emerged from the process.

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[13] For a list of works covered in the workshops, see appendix.

[14] I reviewed over 300 short stories, 14 novels, 9 feature-length movies, 2 short films, and 2 plays. Almost a third of this material was Haitian, a quarter was by African-American authors, and works by Caribbean and African writers made up a third quarter. The rest of the readings featured Afrofuturist or postcolonial content but were by white, Asian, Indigenous, Latinx, and Middle-Eastern contributors. At the risk of essentializing writers to their identities, especially given that many writers fit multiple categories, I believe it is important to hold myself accountable to seeking out material by authors who are members of the marginalized groups they are writing about #ownvoices. For a full list of all supplementary readings, see appendix.

[15] This process of rereading helped me later appreciate the Spiralist technique of rewriting, as documented in Douglas.

Body	**Land**	**Family**
Baby	Sea	Memory
Growth	Journeys	Generations
Transformation / Trauma	Transition / Travel	Transfer / Tradition
Healing	Home	Heritage
Nature	(Ad)venture	Nurture
Being	Space	Time

Fig. 1. An Afrofuturist framework.

I grouped motifs into three categories: Body, Land, Family (see fig. 1). However, an individual motif can easily represent a mix. For example, "blood" closely corresponds to the "family" category, but it also signifies inherited traits linked to the "body", from which blood of course comes. Thus, these divisions are by no means mutually-exclusive. The poetic descriptions presenting each section trace the ways their meanings are mutually dependent.

Stories, of course, span categories: babies are born in homes and raised by families. Assigning each of the eleven stories to a single category means that some elements inevitably go undiscussed. My hope is that readers, equipped with an understanding of the framework, can make the missing links themselves. At one point, I did yield to a fondness for boundary-crossing and allowed an exception. By admitting "Hinche In Parentheses" as a "bridge" story, I acknowledge that my divisions are largely artificial, drawn for the ease of brief analysis.

I am nevertheless encouraged in this exercise by the fact that Vodou itself differentiates in order to concentrate on a certain aspect of the divine. The figure of Ezili, the *lwa* of love, takes on three forms within this collection: Lasirèn, Ezili Freda, and Ezili Dantò.[16] The fact that each

[16] Of course, Ezili has many other manifestations.

form refers to a piece of the framework is further evidence of its utility for making sense of stories. The fact that things do not fit neatly or completely calls for continued engagement rather than abandonment. Meanwhile, author Octavia Butler stepped in to serve as an additional Afrofuturist guide for each section.

If I had to sum up the entire framework in one sentence, it would be “where you come from matters.” In addition to acknowledging the impact of the past on the present and the future, “where you come from” has, at its heart, a sense of community. Across the categories of the framework and the sections of this thesis, the works in this project are concerned with belonging, hierarchy, and obligations to others. Overall, community functions as an ambivalent force: it can inflict harm, but it also makes life (and after-life) meaningful. This two-sidedness intrigues me, given that I have often labeled my work in Haiti as “community engagement” to get grants. In my courses and training, we talked mostly about how to ethically engage as outsiders; there were comparatively few conversations about what it means to be a member of a community. My concerns with relationality, positionality, and kinship within this thesis are as much personal wrestling with my role in this project as commentary on the stories themselves.

Body in the stories "Ench Ant Parantèz" ("Hinche In Parentheses"), "Kewomèt La" ("The Heartometer"), "Jeni Laboratwa" ("Laboratory Geniuses"), and "Pou Bote, Kont Vyeisman" ("For Beauty, Against Aging")

When we talk about bodies, we tend to settle on the nature side of the debate, stating something is in the blood, or the genes, or the programming. We do not leave out the ways a person can change over the course of their life, whether this progression is seen as development or disease. But we are talking about things that happened to some body, rather than choices made with that outcome in mind.

When we talk about bodies we talk about babies. We ask what each parent contributes to the process of producing a new human. We look at relationships between the young and old, men and women, black and white. We haven't gotten to the idea of families yet; that won't come until the end. For now, we are reducing elder status to age, inheritance to DNA, gender to sex, race to skin color, history to pain.

When we talk about bodies we listen to Lasirèn, Ezili's mermaid incarnation. Mind you, we haven't gotten to the idea of water yet. That won't come until the middle. She lives under the sea but does not dominate it like her husband Agwe; she is content with just a hat here and there. For now, we are talking about healing rather than escape, about being still and knowing rather than venturing out.

You know you are talking about bodies when you speak of unhealthiness of any sort. Stupidity, shyness, queerness, ugliness, and trauma all qualify here. The hard part is separating sickness from self; the answer, according to those who ascribe to a social model of disability, is to look beyond the self. Octavia Butler's "Parable of The Sower" features a protagonist who can

feel others' pain. The condition is a handicap for her, until she encounters others with the same affect and establishes a community alongside them.

Blockbuster science fiction promises we can relate to any body by briefly becoming them. James Cameron's *Avatar*, South African director Neil Blomkamp's *District 9*, and the Wachowski sisters' *Sense8* all rely on body switches. Only after adopting the alien's form does the main character begin to care about them. Even *Arrival* implies that rewiring your brain matter is necessary to truly grok[17] extraterrestrial speech. Jordan Peele's *Get Out*, the only example I found told from the perspective of the possessed,[18] exposes the horrific implications of these narratives. Colonizers named the Caribbean after cannibals, but it is we who reduce them to edible bodies.[19] Even as we claim to have internalized their stories, our easy consumption of narratives in which we are complicit marks them as Other; we would never eat our own like this.

Fed up with fighting for empathy, I acquired an appreciation for sympathy: the ability to understand that someone is suffering, even if you cannot personally relate to what they are going through. We should be able to walk beside someone even if we can never walk a mile in their shoes or see the world through their eyes, I reasoned. Frankly, I was intimidated by Zadie Smith's challenge to Peele to "go deeper in, and out the other side" (n.p.). Making connections across difference opens you up to hurt, as "Hinche In Parentheses" illustrates. Driving home one night, Olivier hits a ram that turns out to be his boyfriend Amos in animal form. Waiting

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[17] Robert Heinlein coined this term in his sci-fi novel *Stranger in a Strange Land*. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "to understand intuitively or by empathy, to establish rapport with" and "to empathize or communicate sympathetically (with); also, to experience enjoyment", but the term is never defined in the book itself.

[18] Also see Dubey's counter-example of characters who consensually consume animal flesh in order to gain "embodied knowledge" (36).

[19] hooks, drawn on by Sheller n.p.

"akwoupi nan zèb la" ("crouched in the weeds")[20] while his veterinarian father tries to treat the ram, the anxious Olivier resembles an animal himself.

Reports of Vodou cannibalism may be rooted in these blurred human-animal boundaries.[21] Watching his aunt eat goat for dinner the day after the accident, Olivier reduces her human body to its constituent parts while recognizing the meat she is consuming as flesh that once belonged to a whole, living, breathing, and thinking being:

> "Olivier pa t kapab dekole je li sou kouto matant li an ki t ap dekoupe chè mou a, mouvman dwat men ki t ap kenbe kouto a, lang ki t ap sòti nan bouch pou resevwa mòso a. Oh, dan ki t ap kraze, avèk son mouye" ("Olivier couldn't take his eyes off his aunt's knife cutting the soft flesh, the movement of the right hand that was holding the knife, the tongue that was leaving the mouth to receive the piece. Oh, teeth that were crushing, with a wet sound").

The beings Olivier considers kin have shifted. However, he leaves town in his grief and tries to forget, rather than allowing what happened to him in Hinche to truly transform him.

Olivier is given another chance to prove his loyalty many years later when the police back home claim they have captured a shapeshifter. He uses *moun* to refer to the detainee, but the police insist on drawing a distinction: "Nou pa arete nenpòt ki moun: nou arete yon lougawou" ("We didn't arrest just any *moun*: we arrested a *lougawou*"). Although the term comes from the French for "werewolf," *lougawou* can shift into a variety of forms, not just wolves, and the ability is perceived as an evil choice rather than an affliction brought on by the full moon. Labeled a *lougawou*, the prisoner is at risk of being lynched. The real-life targets of

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[20] I will be using this translation format "original phrase" ("idiomatic translation") throughout this project. All translations are my own.

[21] Parsons, cited in W. Davis 65.

these accusations can be recipients of aid[22] or the disabled,[23] suggesting that scarcity may be part of what provokes these attacks. However, the issue goes beyond being an economic drain or burden on the community. It is a question of whether you qualify emotionally as a member of the community, as a *moun*.

The Haitian saying "tout moun se moun" ("all *moun* are *moun*") is often used to advocate for equal rights. Translating the phrase accurately means rubbing up against questions of who precisely is entitled to these rights. *Moun*, possibly derived from the French phrase "tout le monde" (lit. "all the world," "everyone"),[24] most often means "person." Haitian Creole has a separate word, *imèn*, that captures both the scientific and moral senses of the English equivalent "human." *Kretyen vivan* (lit. "living Christian") also refers to "human being"; Michel DeGraff discusses an instance where a student marked that a tree is not alive on an exam because he assumed the French cognate *vivant* applied only to humans ("Many Hands", 3) Ultimately, the best translation of "tout moun se moun" may rely on the English word "body," yielding "everybody is somebody."

Luckily, the *lougawou* was in its human form when they found him, looking for all the world "menm avèk ou menm avè m, zanmi mwen" ("the same as you and me, my friend"). The police officer even takes pity on the beast and releases him when he notices, "li te blese nan pye" ("he was wounded in the foot"). The injury functions as an indicator of identity: Olivier ran over his boyfriend in the same spot. By perceiving pain, we can recognize people, but this process is easiest when their bodies and hurts resemble our own. The stories in this section take up these

[22] James "Witchcraft."
[23] Leach.
[24] In cases where a word-for-word, literal translation is relevant, I append it in front of the idiomatic translation: (lit. "literal translation of phrase", "idiomatic translation").

questions of embodied personhood and empathy by investigating bodies that take multiple forms or are controlled by multiple forces.

In addition to Haraway's cyborg, the figures of *zonbi* and *lougawou* are particularly useful. If the self can slip out of the body, and the human body can be reanimated or transform into animals and even inanimate objects,[25] divisions between the body and *tout le monde* become less relevant. As these boundaries collapse, we can stop thinking about individual bodies in terms of their function in society and start recognizing societies as forms that are made less whole whenever anybody is excluded.

"The Heartometer" asserts in its first sentence that "zonbi se moun" ("*zonbi* are people, too"). With *moun* temporarily out of the way, I move on to tackling a translation of *zonbi*. Haitian zombies bear little resemblance to their mindless, brain-eating American counterparts: Haitians fear "not the cannibal but the body snatcher, which takes the living body but destroys its soul" (Sheller n.p.). "Soul," of course, is another tricky word. In contrast to Western mind-body dualism, Vodou recognizes three dimensions of subjecthood: the *kò kadav* ("body cadaver"), the *gwo bon anj* ("big good angel"), and the *ti bon anj* ("little good angel").[26] A *bòkò* ("sorcerer") can zombify either a person's physical body or the *gwo bon anj* itself by bottling it.[27]

Possession also involves the *gwo bon anj* being separated from the body, but it is seen as a positive experience (Ward 232). Practitioners describe possession as being "monte" (lit.

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[25] The only outside reference I found to *lougawou* transforming into inanimate objects (in this case, calabashes) was an anonymous blog post "More evil spirits", but one story in our collection, "LE inc.", also incorporates *lougawou* who turn into calabashes and matchboxes.

[26] As defined by Dayan 67-68. at least; James ("Haunting") and Strongman add *nanm* and *zetwal* respectively to the list, and Sterlin (adapted in Pierre et. al 9.) mentions *lonbraj*. Authors agree on *kò kadav*, *gwo bon anj*, and *ti bon anj* and their functions; the discrepancies are the result of what elements the authors themselves believe constitute an aspect of self. For example, Strongman believes an individual's destiny can count.

[27] Strongman remarks, "The fact that one of the most dreaded Afro-diasporic states of being should be so similar to the Cartesian view of the hermetically sealed soul points to the contestatory and critical relationship between these two philosophical traditions" (22).

“mounted,” “ridden”) and refer to themselves as the *lwa*’s “chwal” (“horses”). Haitian proverbs tend to draw a distinction between noble horses and laboring donkeys; if worshippers are being reduced to beasts of burden here, at least they represent the superior sort of steed (Stein 37). An understanding of the tripartite Haitian self also helps us make sense of this metaphor. The combination of *kò kadav* and *ti bon anj* functions as a sort of seat or saddle for either the *gwo bon anj* or a *lwa*. Mounting involves taking control of a vehicle, not a person.

“The Heartometer” features two kinds of mounting, one heartless and the other romantic. In the first, the *zonbi* kills a man and takes over his body: “nan 70 minit, mwen te gentan touye…yon nonm bèl wotè ak gwo pòtray, mwen fè yon zonbi chirijyen ba li kèk ti trè diferan nan figi l epi mwen pran kò a” (“within 70 minutes, I had already killed…a handsome, tall man with a big chest. I had a zombie surgeon give him a few different facial features, and I took the body.”). The specificity of “70 minutes,” the new body’s desirable physical qualities, and the surgeon’s involvement lend the murder a clinical air. In the second, the narrator maintains a mental link with his still-living lover and speaks through her lips rather than his new body’s functional mouth. His muteness, an apparent weakness, makes people more apt to listen to his message, because it marks him as a spirit.

Similarly, young girls kidnapped and taken to Lasirèn’s undersea kingdom are temporarily mute when they turn up again on land. Once their *pa-pale* (“doesn’t talk”)[28] fades, they can use the healing skills they learned while away to cure those who have endured unspeakable things. These resurfaced recruits are also recognizable by their paler skin and straightened hair (Brown 256). While reminiscent of whiteness, these features do not necessarily reinforce European beauty standards; they have a separate name, *simbi*, and, like Lasirèn herself,

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[28] Brown 242.

they function as a reinterpretation. The Vodou pantheon includes both human and animal *lwa*, but Lasirèn is the only hybrid figure. Her mermaid form does not correspond to any African deity and may have been inspired by slave-ship mastheads, rooting it in historical trauma (224). Like Ezili's *veve*, which incorporates romantic European imagery in the form of a heart but pierces it with a dagger, Lasirèn is no siren. She is drawn to dragging girls to her depths, rather than sailors.

When Pyè's son is born with *simbi* markers[29] in "Laboratory Geniuses," his physical appearance gets people whispering that Lasirèn's husband Agwe must be the real father. However, when the boy exhibits extreme intelligence and Pyè arrogantly attributes this to his own seed, everyone believes him. They see no connection between feminine *simbi* emotional capacity and masculine rational thought. For the same reason, no one questions what the child's mother contributed. Women and children become property for men to invest their genes and genius in. Pyè has her bear him nine more children, and infertile husbands pay Pyè to impregnate their wives. As property, women and children must also be protected from thieves. Pyè runs afoul of the hard-working hunchback[30] Jozafa when he sleeps with his wife without permission. The bastard children do not display any signs of smarts, and Jozafa gets revenge by using Vodou to rob Pyè's children of their intelligence. Pyè gazes in despair at "dis timoun li yo ki sanble yon bann petevi, je yo ap tounen tankou vye elis ventilatè ki bouke" ("his ten children who looked like a bunch of retards, their eyes rolling like old propellers on a worn-out fan"). No longer brilliant, they have become broken machines. Just as Pyè sees women as containers for children, he sees his own children as promotional materials; they are only valuable to him while he can capitalize on their prowess as their parent.

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[29] The child is also born with a caul, another trait that marks him as special (Houlberg 276).
[30] Hunchbacks are another marker of special children (ibid).

With their intelligence gone, Pyè worries he will have to find a new job, until an American scientist steps in with a brain implant that will supposedly restore their powers of learning. “For Beauty, Against Aging” also features a character trying to make money off a characteristic that is not genuine. Milady undergoes plastic surgery in the States and opens a beauty supply shop. Aware that if she were to give birth, the children’s plainness might mark her as a fraud and put her out of business, Milady stays single. Later, when her looks begin to fade beyond what science can remedy, the anti-aging spell ironically calls for the one thing she does not possess: child souls. Milady solves the problem by using her profits to sponsor orphans, thereby purchasing proxy offspring who she then kills. Convinced her most important quality is her physical appearance, Milady will stop at nothing to maintain her looks, just as Pyè will do anything to preserve his fake reputation as father of geniuses. Both characters reduce people’s value to the income they can generate from a single trait and do not hesitate to sacrifice others in their self-interest.

In contrast, “The Heartometer” proposes a device that can measure someone’s general usefulness to society as a whole. Its objective heartocracy may be an improvement on illusory meritocracy, but as an autistic person I was uncomfortably reminded of Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright’s Empathy Quotient (EQ) instrument.[31] I wondered what forms of social death low-scorers were subjected to in order to obtain this brave new world. “The Heartometer” does not directly address these concerns, but a story within the story at least adds nuance about what its

[31] There is a strong case to be made that autism is more a deficit in expression than feeling. Unable to pick up on or convey emotions through subtle cues such as body language, autistic people can come across as colder than we actually are. Indeed, some autistic people report experiencing a sort of hyper-empathy, in which others’ emotions overwhelm them. These questions about theory of mind – whether autistic people can recognize what is going on in someone else’s head – thus end up illustrating the difficulty of knowing what is going on in anyone’s head or heart, especially when they are a member of a group whose minds, bodies, or desires are marginalized. However, I chose not to engage with the empathy debate in this essay both because some autistic people do identify as low-empathy and because I want to deconstruct the concept of empathy itself.

own definition of empathy may encompass. Possessed by their research, the device's inventors neglect their basic needs. In another author's hands, their story would function as a cautionary tale, but its conclusion instead employs the language of a romance: "yon bon jou yo dekouvri youn mouri nan bra lòt" ("one fine day they were discovered dead in each other's arms"). A labor of love, their creation demonstrates that expressions of affection and personhood can take nonconventional and seemingly-dysfunctional forms.

Their story is made easier to swallow by the fact that the computer research that consumed the pair proves useful to wider society. Their data, drawn from the Internet, turns out to be more about human emotions than mere machine information. While they die before they can share their discovery, their work lives on and has an impact when the *zonbi* resurrects it. Both the worldwide web and the *zonbi* represent instances of what Alisa Braithwaite describes as "prosthetic community" (86). Rather than seeing the cyborg as an outfitted individual, we note how cyber connections create networks of people and ideas, enabling communication across boundaries.

Reading "Laboratory Geniuses" alongside "The Heartometer," I wondered whether the former had to end as tragically as it did. The story specifies that although Pyè's chip-equipped kids are smarter than they ever were, they are no longer personable. Their father sues the laboratory for turning them into "bèt" (beasts) and "wobo" ("robots").[32] In fact, they are worse than these non-human beings, because they are not even useful to humans. They create useful computer tools, but their programs help no one because no one knows about them. In contrast, Jozafa's Vodou-enabled geniuses become community leaders. I couldn't help but wonder

[32] Strongman notes similarities between Descartes' body-as-clockwork and Vodou's *kò kadav* (23). Both in turn allude to robots.

whether Pyè's asocial savants could have also benefited society if they had only had access to a mystical interpreter to convey their findings.

My first job in Haiti was that of an interpreter, a role I quickly learned to distinguish from that of a translator. I take great pride in my competence at facilitating cross-cultural communication; my preference for explicitness is particularly useful in this context. At the same time, I know that the awkwardness I achieve among my closest Haitian friends represents authentic connection. In the interactions that seemingly go more smoothly, I am relying on the fact that as a visible outsider, I attract attention, which often takes the form of substantial assistance. My foreignness and relative power mean my mistakes are more easily dismissed, and explanations about appropriate behavior are more readily offered to me. I am accommodated.

As Milady's case reminds us, protection based on what you are able to offer others is precarious. Her customers appreciate what she does for them, but they do not accept her as one of their own. Her beauty products cannot make up for her choice not to make use of her own beauty by marrying one of her many suitors and reproducing. While she is able to attract the attention of Agwe, who saves her from going to prison for child trafficking, another *lwa* fatally rapes her. Readers were divided on whether to interpret this ending as brutal or a just punishment for her actions. The debate hinged on whether we believed Milady understood what she had done on an emotional level.

I only began to question my reluctance to engage emotionally with black pain once I registered and sat with my personal responses to stories about white pain. I was in Haiti conducting a workshop for this project when a white woman was killed in a protest back in the U.S. We were a few days away from the 226th anniversary of Bwa Kayiman, the ceremony and war council that began the Haitian Revolution, but the fight against slavery still isn't over where

I come from. Angry white people held their own ritual, walking with torches in a town where I once lived. I watched things unfold on my Facebook feed, begging our sluggish WiFi to keep up with friends' live video clips. Even with the geographic and technological disconnect, it felt incredibly intimate. The grief and dread were visceral and familiar; I was reminded of freshman year, when I stumbled across a white friend's name listed as a kidnapping victim in a news archive. I found myself crying in the middle of the library, hit particularly hard by an "it could have been me" feeling. However, even these strong reactions do not qualify as empathy exactly, because they involved me placing myself intellectually in the same situation, rather than feeling for the actual victim.

Even in situations where it is possible to fully understand what someone else is going through, self-interest tends to overpower fellow-feeling. Once an orphan herself, Milady understands these innocents' plight well but does not hesitate to harm them. The story offers the brutal bullying she endured as a possible explanation, if not an excuse, for her heartlessness: "Milady te sispann moun depi lavi te souflete lè l te timoun. Po moun, kè bèt" ("Milady had ceased to be a person ever since life struck her when she was a child. Skin of a person, heart of a beast"). Removed from the human community, Milady became a monster.

Only once we recognize each other as connected does self-interest become community interest. We are concerned with all members and their hurts; Milady's childhood trauma and the pain she inflicts on children matter simultaneously. We can accomplish this shift by expanding the definition of humanity, but we may also extend our prosthetic community to include feeling for the animals and things that systems such as slavery rely on framing as separate from ourselves. Perhaps the antidote to exploitation is to "make objects come 'alive,'" the cure to dispossession is to allow yourself to be possessed, and dismemberment and deformity can be

healed by forming a new community in which we are all members (Hopkinson, qtd. in Dubey 45).

Without a heartometer on hand, bringing about this vision is tricky. I am encouraged in my efforts by my participants' own courage. I only hear about people who look like me getting hurt once in a while, and often it is because they chose to put themselves in a specific, dangerous situation. I was reminded of this privilege of pain going over consent forms for the workshop. My participants chuckled at the clauses about harm that could come to them: "We're writers. Just by putting our opinions on paper, we're exposing ourselves to more violence than the average Haitian. And remember, the average Haitian is already exposed to plenty of violence." They write anyway, because they understand the risk as necessary. Deciding that their stories cannot affect me deeply because they do not affect me directly dishonors their work.[33]

Lately, I have pushed myself to "honour the suffering and hope of others not because we are humbled by their impenetrability and unknowability, but because of how we see our sufferings and our labours as co-constitutive of the world we inhabit" (Haggas, qtd. in Weheliye 14). Rather than a heartometer that measures a single person's personhood, we might imagine an instrument that assesses interdependency. When the nurse who gives me my shot twice a week asks if there are really cannibals down there, I can have mixed feelings about my function as a sympathetic white American interpreter while still fulfilling it in the hopes that her hearing my answer will push our collective percentage up.

[33] As Nnedi Okorafor reminds us, "Just because a story isn't written specifically for you, does not mean you can't relate to it. If that were the case, growing up, I'd have had nothing to read" (n.p.).

Land in the stories "LE s.a." ("LE inc."), "Govi lò a" ("The Clay Jar"), "Ti Jan" ("Little John"), and "Ench Ant Parantèz" ("Hinche In Parentheses")

Every category contains dualities; this section, the middle passage of this project, even more so. We can't talk about home without talking about leaving. And we couldn't talk about leaving at all if someone didn't stay behind to tell the story or if travelers didn't come back again, a round trip, to tell us where they've been and what they've seen.

When we talk about land we talk about sea. Our maps mark the things that do not move, but in between we admit fluidity. Killmonger's last words in Black Panther – *"Bury me in the ocean with my ancestors that jumped from ships because they knew death was better than bondage" – remind us that the ocean as a whole may serve as a memorial site. You cannot bury an object in water the same way you can in earth: things present in the depths may still affect flows at the surface, and upwelling remains a possibility.*

When we talk about land we listen to Ezili Freda, the lwa*'s romantic incarnation. We haven't gotten to motherhood yet, even though we've arrived home. For now, it is still just "now": we are traveling through space rather than time. We are talking about occupying an area rather than being occupied by a task, about deeds that declare ownership rather than deeds that start and continue revolutions.*

Still, let us not sell travel short, let us not leave out the search that starts everything out. Octavia Butler's Earthseed *philosophy calls humans to take to the stars. She did not anticipate a better New World waiting for us on these other worlds. She simply hoped the ship-building would bring about community-building.*

On one of my first trips to Haiti, we installed solar panels in a mountaintop village that lacked access to electricity. Exploring nearby, we came across the *poto mitan* ("central pillar") of a Vodou temple. I had never seen one before, and I briefly appreciated that the place's relative isolation permitted more openness about the religion. Then, standing beside it, I saw Port-au-Prince sprawled out below us, its lights blinking on as day turned to dusk. I wondered why the people on the mountain did not descend to the city, where I imagined water, medical care, education, and technology would be more accessible.[34] As we mounted motorcycles to descend, I had a vision of jet-packs that would free people from the tyranny of rough terrain, allowing them to easily transition from *andeyò* ("outside") to urban modernity and back again.

One of this project's writers also imagined an airborne future, but within the context of getting around Port-au-Prince itself. Public transportation in Haiti's capital currently consists of tap-taps (pick-up trucks whose beds have been outfitted with benches and roofs), vans, and buses. It is public in the sense that anyone can use it, but the government does not fund it. Drivers maximize their profit by squeezing on as many passengers as they can. During rush hour, commuters forget common courtesy and try to shove their way on. After enduring the indignity of one of these seat grabs, the protagonist of "LE inc.," Soumiyah, reflects on whether a more humane mode of getting around is available to her.

She can easily imagine a solution for her personal suffering: a private car would permit her to travel in style and solitude. However, the masses would still be stuck riding the bus. Soumiyah chastises her own selfishness with a Haitian proverb: "se menm lide pachiman sa yo, ki lakòz chak koukouy rale flach yo pou klere pou je" ("it's messed-up ideas like that causing every firefly to hide its light away for its eyes alone"). Here, the natural world is not necessarily

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[34] I had not yet visited a slum.

innocent. Left to their own devices and natures, both people and animals look out for themselves and mistreat one another. Even structures such as the government can fail if they are occupied by corrupt officials; the state has not maintained the streets, to the point where any ground transportation start-up would be rendered powerless by the potholes. The stories in this section are concerned with power in both its literal and figurative senses. Characters have to fill up the gas tank and charge their spiritual energy to make their trips; they also have to navigate hierarchies. Mobility is both spatial and social.

When Soumiyah approaches her uncle Klofa with the idea of starting an airline with *lougawou* pilots, he wonders why he did not think of it himself. However, it takes a mental leap to see *lougawou* as anything but monsters. "Witch" is not a bad translation: *lougawou* are women who fly around at night terrifying children. In their discussion of gay men who identify with the creature, D.A. Chapman et al. focus on its "freedom," pointing to its power to fly in Edwidge Danticat's book *Krik? Krak!* (153). We can contrast *lougawou* flight with masculine narratives of winged escape (Anatol 32-33). While straight men take off triumphantly in Morrison's *Song of Solomon*[35] and the *Krik? Krak!* story "A Wall Of Fire Rising", their women must stay behind to pass the legend down to the children. *Lougawou* represent a femininity that deviates from this heterosexual norm by refusing to reproduce and settle down. Unfortunately, this freeing choice comes with stigma: having cut itself off from others, the *lougawou* has no control over the stories they tell about it.

This gendered question of who gets to leave and be remembered as a hero is echoed in DeLoughrey's "routes-roots", or, irreverently, "sea men-land, ho" dichotomy. Women are

[35] Anatol 62.

identified with the earth and national belonging, while men go to sea in search of new territory.[36] Narratives about land as liberty uphold this dichotomy. After centuries of slavery under the plantation system, post-Revolution Haitians were wary of any land distribution arrangements that called for large-scale agricultural production (Dubois 107). Instead, they created the *lakou* ("yard") system of small, egalitarian communities in which each household tills its own plot. When a baby is born, the family plants a fruit tree and buries the navel cord that once connected them to their mother beneath it, literally binding the child to the land that they will one day inherit. The narrative of "Little John" is rooted in *lakou*; the grandmother's last words to the titular character are, "kontak lanati se fòs nou…veye rasin ou" ("contact with nature gives us strength...look to your roots"). Little John must then locate his grandfather's tree to cross over to the spirit realm.

Lakou still exist within the context of the city, but they function differently because self-sufficiency is not as feasible. Without the ability to grow food and with rent to pay, residents must work for someone else for a living. Using this labor lens, we can begin to see a negative side to Soumiyah's *lougawou* business venture. Working for Soumiyah is supposed to improve her pilots' reputation: "moun ta sispann wè lougawou yo tankou djab, baka ki pa itil sosyete a anyen men yo t ap pito wè yo tankou yon kokenn zouti devlopman" ("people would stop seeing *lougawou* as devils and demons who are not useful at all to society. Instead, they would see them as a huge tool for development"). However, even as we applaud Soumiyah for hiring members of

[36] In modern-day Haiti, men travel *lòt bò dlo* ("across the water", abroad) or to metropolitan areas in search of work. However, Haitian women also engage in economic travel, connecting regions as merchants or serving relatives in the city; Soumiyah is by no means remarkable for being a female entrepreneur. Even when they remain in the countryside, women can make use of the *kawo tè* ("acre of land") between their legs through the institution of *plasaj* ("placement"), which in some ways offers more autonomy than monogamous marriage. Given all that they do, Haitians refer to women as the *poto mitan* of society, an Atlas-like role that is often accompanied with more abuses and burdens than advantages. See Dayan 128-139 and Lamour for further discussion of women's mobility in Haiti.

this marginalized group, we should examine how her employees' stigmatized status makes them easy to exploit.

Lougawou are only valuable to Soumiyah and Haiti in terms of what they can contribute to her business and its economy, rather than as fellow citizens with inherent worth. LE inc. is ultimately a private company, not a public transportation system, and it is concerned with profit. Soumiyah cares about the comfort and safety of her customers but not her pilots. As long as the company is structured with her at its head and them on the bottom, their work environment is unlikely to improve. In order to shift their position and have their complaints heard, the *lougawou* organize a strike.

"Little John" also features mystical beings engaged in protest against their higher-ups: *zonbi* demand better treatment from the *lwa*. Equivalent here to the souls of the dead, *zonbi* are not pampered in heaven or tormented in hell; their after-life consists of material conditions that they can take action to improve. One Haitian Creole term for where they live, *mond envisib*, translates to "invisible world." It is not separate from the physical world, located somewhere underwater rather than on another plane entirely.[37] We cannot always see it, but it is still here as opposed to elsewhere. Even the *lwa* must move within the mundane; Haitian Vodou has its own transatlantic origin story of serpent couple Damballah and Ayida swimming and flying across from Africa rather than simply teleporting (Watanabe 252). By contrast, in "The Clay Jar", the journey between realms simply involves dozing off. However, what the story lacks in supernatural geography it makes up for in economics: the trip requires immense energy. The gate-keeper *lwa* Legba checks whether Jefferson has enough power before letting him enter via a sacred *mapou* tree at the crossroads. Running out of power, even in this insubstantial place, will

[37] Yes, Heaven is literally a place on Earth.

have consequences for his physical form.[38] Inside, Jefferson attracts the attention of a young *lwa* named Yeyela, who gifts him with a clay jar to protect his quickly-diminishing life force crystal from damage.

Jefferson is the first human some of the spirits have ever seen, but not everyone is as impressed as Yeyela: "Se jis aparans nou yo gen. Yo pa gen en pousan nan kapasite nou, laj nou, eksperyans nou ak konesans nou" ("They only look like us. They don't have one percent of our capacity, our age, our experience, or our knowledge"). Jefferson retorts, "An se mwen ki sanble ak nou! M ta panse se nou ki sanble ak mwen wi" ("Oh, so it's me who resembles you! I thought it was the other way around"). This debate about who resembles who recalls Zora Neale Hurston's disparaging assertion about Vodou: "Gods always behave like the people who make them" (qtd. in Mikell 228). Hurston is incapable of viewing the *lwa* as entirely divine, because she detects man-made discrimination within the religion's practices – emphasis on "man" (Sorensen 11-12). It is important to critique misogynistic ideologies wherever they are present; the romantic *lwa* Ezili Freda in particular can be twisted to suit male sexual fantasies. At the same time, she celebrates femininity, can blur binaries by mounting men,[39] and escapes being claimed by any single man as individually his.[40]

Ezili Freda makes a brief appearance in "Little John," in a bedrom scene in which Legba insults and then slaps her. This scene sparked the most debate of any story within our group, with some members calling for its removal. Ultimately, we recognized that Legba's lines reveal his attitude towards humans and not just Ezili: "Bèl bouzen sa, ou ka kite ale! Menm lèzòm pran pa yo!" ("Let a beautiful whore like this go! Even the humans have taken their share!"). We gain

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[38] Yes, if you die in the spirit realm, you die in real life.
[39] Strongman 27.
[40] Collins 59.

insight into why Legba, ostensibly responsible for establishing contact with humans via the crossroads, has not been discharging his duties. He is distracted by Ezili, but he also has disdain for humans. Little John's arrival in the spirit realm shocks him back into action; he must stop more humans from entering.

Human immigration is also a concern in "The Clay Jar." Normally, Legba is able to block human sorcerers with bad intentions from contacting spirits who are greedy enough for energy that they will agree to any deal, no matter the broader consequences. However, a human has bypassed him by traveling underwater, and now Haiti is at risk of being reconquered by the U.S. Again, we see that what happens in the spirit realm does not stay there; it impacts the real world. Momoyole, one of the senior *lwa*, vows to implement stricter border controls in the future. For now, he dispatches Jefferson and Yeyela to the water kingdom to break the contract. Lasirèn, queen of the realm, is among the *lwa* who detest humans. However, she trusts Yeyela enough to let Jefferson in. There, the group makes a surprising discovery: Momoyole was the *lwa* who signed the contract. Suddenly, his emphasis on restricting passage makes sense. Traveling humans like Jefferson represent a threat to his bid for power, because they have their own independent energy sources.

Unfortunately, Jefferson has been in the realm too long and is too weak at this point to reverse the curse. Yeyela has access to unlimited power in the form of four-starred earrings she received from her mother, but she hesitates to give them up. Ultimately, she resolves, "M p ap fè l pou Ayisyen yo, yo pa konnen mwen, mwen pa konnen yo. M ap fè sa pou Jefferson ak tout moun li renmen yo" ("I won't do it for the Haitians, they don't know me, I don't know them. I'll do it for Jefferson and all the people he loves"). This decision, made out of personal loyalty to an individual rather than patriotic affiiliation to a country or the politicial advantages of the *lwa*-

human hierarchy, reflects a crossroads and rhizome mentality that rejects routes and roots. As Glissant explains it, the rhizome functions as "an enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently" (11). Rather than putting down deep roots, you establish the sort of far-flung interconnections that allow rings of mushrooms to pop up overnight.[41]

As the "Republic of NGOs," Haiti attracts more than its fair share of well-intentioned foreigners. I used to hold a grudging respect for the missionaries who stay after the aid workers and academics leave until I was exposed to rhizome theory and its accompanying practice, errantry. Errantry calls for endless and end-less wandering: settling limits what you are exposed to, and coming to a place with a specific purpose limits what you will get out of the experience. While not tied to a community, the errant still adheres to a code of ethics, such as the knight's chivalry, that dictates how they will treat those they come across.

Ghetto Biennale, an international arts festival held every two years in Port-au-Prince, offers a case study of an attempt at forming a rhizomic network. Event participants consist of a local artists' collective and an international crowd that comes back every two years; however, hierarchies embedded in both groups prevented it from being truly horizontal. At the start, I still thought it had potential: "make art" felt like a less-defined purpose at least than "do good"[42] or "do research." However, true errantry turned out to be harder to achieve than I thought. The artists I met tended to embrace expressivity, romance in all its senses, and spontaneity. These are all values Ezili Freda herself would endorse, but they do not an interpersonal ethics make. Such an ethics turned out to be especially necessary given the gender dynamics of each group

[41] A phenomenon that European folklore attributes to fairy magic.

[42] As opposed to the "do right" embraced by Terry Pratchett's errant witches, who reside in the rural margins rather than the metropolis where the male wizards work (Rozario).

involved. Women were well-represented among the visiting artists and the international organizing committee was all female, but only one member of the Haitian collective was a woman, and she was relegated to supervising the teenage participants. At one event, a man and his wife got into an argument and he struck her, knocking out a tooth. I was optimistic at first that he would at least be banned from the space for the duration of the festival. However, local leaders felt the need to be more delicate in their handling of the situation, and the other organizers deferred to them. Other visiting artists and I voiced our displeasure by boycotting the man's drink stand, but this petty demonstration of our relative financial power as foreigners did nothing to make the space more welcoming to Haitian women. In fact, we deprived the victim and her children of much-needed income. Later, several of us suggested establishing guidelines for behavior that would make it easier to remove aggressors from the space in the future. While the measure perhaps increased safety and made the space more welcoming for women in theory, it did nothing to change the reality that Haitian men dominate creative spaces partly because they have fewer responsibilities and thus more spare time to be creative. Access is multifaceted; merely building does not guarantee they can come.

A small success was that one visiting artist had explicitly sought out young women who lived nearby to participate in her project. I spent one of the last nights of the Biennale with this group. At the restaurant, I found myself unable to participate in their banter about boys. There was no language barrier and I was welcomed to join in, but as a closeted queer, trans person, I had nothing honest to contribute. Later, the girls donned bikinis to swim in the hotel pool while I put on a sports bra and shorts. When men asked me why I was covering up, I didn't know which layer to address first. I wanted to establish I wasn't being modest without outing myself as not a woman.

When it came to my own project, I recruited enough women to make up a small majority: six out of eleven participants. In our workshop, we read and discussed several stories with female protagonists. I also inserted Gary Victor's "Maléfices" ("Curses"), which features a nonbinary character as the partner of a gay were-pig. The concept of a man who involuntarily transforms into a pig a few nights each week because he made a deal with the Devil was easy enough for participants to grasp. We spent much more time talking about whether the nonbinary person's human body could be gender-neutral. When the writer of "The Clay Jar" described a spirit "ki pa sanble ni fi, ni gason" ("who did not resemble a girl or a boy"), I wondered whether our workshop discussion had influenced her. However, I could not take too much personal credit because I had not personally voiced as queer or trans to participants. I knew it would be relatively safe for me to do so as a foreigner, but I rationalized that this low risk implied little reward, and I did not want to highlight my foreignness by flaunting identities that a Haitian would hesitate to disclose. However, my refusal to share those parts of myself, especially because I am open about them back at home, became its own barrier.

When the writer of "Hinche In Parentheses" made homosexuality a central theme of her story, I was nervous about how readers would respond. Almost every reviewer remarked that the story's queer relationship is "taboo," but in contrast to the slut-shaming "Little John" Ezili Freda controversy, no one asked for it to be changed. This different response may have been because the violence in "Little John" came across as somewhat gratuitous, whereas "Hinche" depicts a loving relationship that is key to the plot. However, the contrasting reactions to "Hinche" may also have been related to limitations in how I was able to set up the conversation about it.

Of our group, three authors are Haitian-Americans who live throughout Florida, and the other eight are all Haitians who live in the same city. The Haitians never got to meet the Haitian-

Americans in person, and the Haitians met among themselves more regularly than the Haitian-Americans were able to travel to see one another. Thus, the comments about “Little John” came up during a face-to-face conversation, whereas most of the exchanges about “Hinche” were through text and from people who had never personally met its author.

I also wondered whether the author’s *dyaspora* (“diaspora”) status influenced how “Hinche” was perceived. *Dyaspora*, a term used to refer to Haitians who no longer live on the island, can be a dirty word in Haiti. Calling someone *dyaspora* can imply that they are a sell-out, a brain that has been drained whose connection to their homeland is now strained. The question of authenticity arises. While the author displays extensive inside knowledge of *lougawou* in “Hinche,” readers might claim that while the *lougawou* is indeed Haitian, his attraction to another man is not. Wrestling with similar critiques of his work as a queer Jamaican who lives abroad, Derek Walcott expands on Glissant by calling for a “homopoetics” of relation that does not simply span borders or mix cultures but actively circulates across and among them (144). We should be careful not to conflate Walcott’s *dyaspora* positionality with the “binding mobilities of consumption” enacted by true foreigners such as the character of Sean, a white American aid worker who accompanies Olivier to Hinche (Sheller n.p.).

Sean could not get as much of a thrill out of Haiti if Haitians enjoyed equal access to the U.S. in terms of visas, finances, and safety. Because they do not, he is able to embark with the blasé attitude of a “touris” (“tourist”), drawn to but also ultimately unbothered by the potential danger. In contrast, the trip represents a real risk and is not a choice at all for Olivier. His Canadian boss has run off for a few days to the Dominican Republic with the Cuban secretary, leaving Olivier to man the office when the call from his hometown comes in. As a local employee, he travels for work rather than pleasure to places he has been before. Olivier attempts

an economic argument that embargo-augmented gas prices are too high to make the trip; in truth, it is the emotional toll of going back after many years away that concerns him.

Sean is fond of sensationalizing the country he is visiting by saying “ou vin granmoun sèlman lè ou fin wè lanmò. E nan peyi Dayiti, lanmò swiv ou toupatou” (“you only grow up once you’ve come face to face with death. And in Haiti, death is everywhere”). Meanwhile, what Olivier went through in Hinche “te fè li granmoun bone” (“made him grow up early”). Sean has traveled farther than Olivier, but Olivier has been affected more deeply by what he has been through. This question of relative maturity also comes up in “The Clay Jar.” Momoyole, the villain, calls Yeyela’s sympathy for humans childish: “li sanble p ap janm gen matirite” (“she seems like she’ll never grow up”). Yeyela’s relative youth turns out to be an advantage. She is able to bond with Jefferson and save Haiti because she has not yet been corrupted by schemes with or prejudices against humans.

The NGO in “Hinche” attempts to ward off corruption by making Olivier fill out a form before he fills up a tank of gas. Like many agencies, they police small, local transactions and likely overlook large, international breaches and waste. A more effective policy might be to recruit employees who are personally accountable to the people they supposedly serve. Olivier’s reluctance to go to Hinche is rooted in his ties to it as his hometown. However, these personal connections cannot have a positive impact unless they are coupled with a commitment to growth. Although what happened in Hinche changed him, Olivier has managed to stay stagnant ever since; he has entered an unsatisfying marriage with a woman and is unable to act on his attraction to Sean. Thus, going back is painful not only because it brings up bad memories but because life has gone on as usual there since Olivier left, while he himself has not moved on.

Community connections are also ineffective when they force someone to conceal their true feelings. Fearful of judgment, Olivier was discreet about his relationship with Amos, which may have affected its outcome. Olivier assumed his father's pronouncement "l ale" ("he went") was a euphemism for his boyfriend's death, but his father may have been intentionally cryptic to avoid speaking aloud about either Amos's shape-shifting abilities or Olivier's queer relationship with him. Presented with evidence that his boyfriend might be alive after all, Olivier gets the *lougawou*'s address from the police but is torn about whether to pay him a visit.

The concept of crossroads, central in both Haitian Vodou and African religions, can imply choice, the ability to go down one road or the other. However, the parties crossing paths are often not on equal footing, and the various options are not equally available to everyone. Of Port-au-Prince, Paul Farmer writes, "Haiti is probably the only country in the world where a Martin Luther King Avenue runs into a John Brown Avenue" (n.p.). White-washed depictions of slavery and the civil rights movement tend to applaud MLK and white abolitionists for their nonviolent methods rather than recognizing how their approaches were shaped by the specter of violence. Its looming threat forced authorities to take their demands more seriously. Rather than two roads intersecting, we might imagine current events mixing in an estuary. The focus sometimes has to be on redirecting the flow rather than making a stand. We cannot control what paths people or gods take, but we can try to influence their decisions, and we can manipulate how others interpret their choices.

Foreigners who critique Haitian attitudes toward the future as "fatalistic" would do well to understand that when Haitians append "si Dye vle" ("Lord willing") to discussions of plans, they are speaking of a God who can be swayed by practices such as Vodou. Music can be a key method of speaking to both human and mystical masses, as songs such as Boukman Esperyans's

"Kalfou Dangere" ("Dangerous Crossroads"), which was banned for being too violent, reveal. The singers promise that wrongdoers will be punished if caught at the sacred ground of the crossroads, but they do not want to be mistaken for Bizango (J. Smith 63). Male counterparts to the *lougawou*, these secret society shapeshifters control movement at night by requiring passports of passerby;[43] women especially stay in after dark for fear of encountering them on the roads. Boukman Esperyans clarify that the difference between them and Bizango is their code of ethics, which forbids lying, cheating, and stealing.

In some ways, the danger is over for Olivier. He got to Hinche safely; the accident may not have been deadly; the police did not detain the criminal. However, taking the next step is difficult because he has been living in fear for so long that he has not developed a personal code. At the start of the story, Olivier is acting on his boss's behalf; by its end, he does not even mention *lougawou* in his official report. The decision of what to do with the information he has received is his alone. His happiness is in his own hands, and that prospect is harder for him to handle than any work responsibility that could be placed on his shoulders because it represents a real, personal risk. Even when his boyfriend takes matters into his own hands and appears before him, Olivier is still not ready to go or sure about what to think. He mutters, "yo voye w" ("they sent you"), implying he sees Amos as a member of some nefarious Bizango sect rather than an independent, queer *lougawou* who has chosen to come because he cares. Concerned all his life with what others thought of him, Olivier has failed to find the personal liberty that is "the primary condition for true participation in a community" (Glover, "Exploiting", 119). Rather than moving up or out, Olivier needs to follow Yeyela's example and allow himself to move and be moved by others.

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[43] W. Davis refers to them as "a force that protects community resources, particularly land" (238).

Family in "Wazimba," "The Devil In The Details,"[44] "Men Nimewo Djab La!" ("Here's The Devil's Number!"), and "And The Ants Will Tell"

We can't talk about families without talking about things to come. Both raising children and speaking of the dead function as forms of planning for a future when we will no longer be alive. Of course, children come up with their own ways, but we keep trying to bring them up anyway. By honoring those who came before us, we remind each other that we can remain relevant.

When we talk about families, we are talking about memory. Toni Morrison ends Beloved *with "this is not a story to pass on," calling for an examination of the parts of the past we carry with us. Our parents leave us names and traditions and legacies and hurt. Even if we try to leave these things behind, we find ourselves linked to them.*

When we talk about families we listen to Ezili Dantò, the divine mother who lost her tongue in the war and relies on her child to speak for her. We are talking about both revolution and evolution: daring to imagine a better world and then working to make it happen, day in and day out, until our last day and beyond.

Inspired by Octavia Butler's work, adrienne maree brown advocates for an Afrofuturist prefigurative politics. The movements we are building must become microcosms, reflecting on a fractal level our visions of how things should be. We demonstrate that new structures are worthy by setting them up in the spaces and stories available to us, however small or simple they may seem.

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[44] This story, as well as "And The Ants Were Tell", were originally written in English, and I elected to use this original version in my analysis.

Figure 2. An Afrofuturist meme

This meme (see fig. 2), shared among members of the Haitian diaspora, depicts an astronaut orbiting Earth with the caption "Haitians be like I'm 2 minutes away."[45] An Afrofuturist vision if there ever was one, Haitian-Americans use it to poke loving fun at the gap between Caribbean and U.S. notions of "on time." Outsiders harshly criticize the same phenomenon. When they are not calling the individual latecomer lackadaisical, they blame Haiti and its developing-world infrastructure. They conceive of Haiti as trapped in the past, struggling at a sluggish pace to catch up. By invoking time-travel to explain the inequalities, they fail to see that Haiti has in fact fully developed to fill a role it was forced into.[46] They also presume their approach represents progress,[47] rather than recognizing their wealth as linked to Haitian oppression and conceiving alternatives for how both our societies should be.

In contrast to a model of linear advancement, we can take cues from the Haitian writers who stayed during the Duvalier years and picture spirals.[48] Ellison's Invisible Man was right to warn us about those who speak of this model (n.p). Even Susan Buck-Morss's efforts to

[45] I came across it on a private Facebook group in late 2017, but the first use of it I could find was a profile picture for CAP-PORT MARGOT on the haitianbeatz.com forum in June 2014.
[46] See Gilroy for the argument that Haiti is quintessentially modern.
[47] Bland writes, "It's time to challenge William Gibson's overused quote: 'the future is already here — it's just not very evenly distributed." Sometimes when people use this phrase they seem to imply that Silicon Valley (or London's Silicon Roundabout) know what the future will hold and the rest of us will follow" (n.p.).
[48] See Glover's *Haiti Unbound* for a study of the Spiralist literary movement.

reconcile Haiti and Hegel fail to properly account for creoles.[49] However, the model itself is still useful. In trying to understand whether creoles and other Caribbean cultural elements represent a reduction or a remix of the master's contributions, we apply the spiral in a different sense. Time doubles back on itself. Repetition is not a symptom of madness; in fact, it keeps parents especially sane by reassuring them that no story is truly exceptional. However, neither the cycles nor the children are perfect replicas. The repetition comes with variation and scales in both directions. These fractals allow us to reflect on how the simple, the secret, and the routine make history.

Our ties to others can keep us from being tempted by the special, the popular, and the rare. At the start of "Wazimba," Papè is vulnerable because he is disconnected. He prays, but not to the gods of his father, instead directing his hopes into the ether. He is also cut off from secular society: he celebrates his birthday by drinking alone, and a knock at the door startles him because he has shown no one where he lives. It turns out to be his old girlfriend, Azoubwèt. Papè is stunned to see her, but she easily silences his suspicions with lavish gifts, including a large box she tells him to open the next day. Papè follows her mysterious instructions unquestioningly. When he encounters an exhausted, dirty figure on the road later, he is shocked to recognize it as Azoubwèt and pretends not to see her. He prefers to believe in the Azoubwèt who gave him gifts rather than the one in need.

Back at home, Papè finds a letter from Azoubwèt, but the text fades as soon as he tries to read it. Thus, we arrive at a final translation for *zonbi*: ghost.[50] In contrast to the concept of family spirits who haunt their descendants with unfinished business, we can consider Derrida's

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[49] Buck-Morss claims, "there was no common language in the New World, no phonetic system of shared meanings" and does not apply the concept of creole in its broader sense of Caribbean cultural mixing, although her "syncretic" and "porosity" sometimes come close to being synonyms (120).
[50] This aligns with McCalister's definition of *zonbi* as "the common, everyday spirits of the recently dead" (462).

specter whose "secret is not unspeakable because it is taboo, but because it cannot (yet) be articulated in the languages available to us" (C. Davis 379). When there are no words, bodies themselves can become texts,[51] but Papè missed his chance to receive Azoubwèt's message. He should have spoken to her in person, however disheveled her physical appearance. Upon opening the box, Papè suddenly finds himself in a void, floating beside a fleshless girl. They communicate via touch instead of speech. Although he was unwilling to engage with the once-human, mundane monster, Papè consents to contact with this supernatural being.

She tells him she is Wazimba, queen of the underworld and the answer to his prayers. Apparently, Papè is neither a "*senp moun*" ("mere mortal") like Azoubwèt nor a spirit like Wazimba but something else entirely. Haraway's boundary-crossing cyborg figure does not apply here. Instead, we might refer to the zombie, which has been proposed as a posthuman poster monster in its place: "it is not enough to negate the model 'either/or' by claiming 'both/and'" (Lauro and Embry 95). In turn, the spiralist zombie expands on this "neither/nor" position by noting the zombie's potential for a positive change that rejects both "unambiguous heroism and victimhood" (Glover, "New Narratives", 39). While she waits for Papè to become powerful enough to join her in the underworld, Wazimba is willing to provide for him so that he never has to work a day in his life on Earth. Papè does not immediately accept her generosity this time. He asks what the letter said.

Wazimba explains that she took Azoubwèt's form to gain Papè's trust. The real Azoubwèt was the one he met on the road, and his soul is connected to hers, non-human status notwithstanding. Jealous of their bond, Wazimba withheld the contents of her letter. Infuriated by her betrayal, Papè rejects her offer of riches. He is not ready to die before he has lived out a

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[51] See Löffler 153 for an example of bodies being used for cross-racial, queer, vampiric communication.

full life by Azoubwèt's side. Thus, although he qualifies as a queer sort of being, Papè does not exhibit Edelman's death drive. Critiquing Edelman, Muñoz delights in the daily and notes that "recognition, across antagonisms within the social…is often more than simply a tacit admission of vulnerability. Indeed, it is often a moment of being wounded" (93). As we turn from the living dead to the undead, we see the impulse for wounded kinship at work; vampires generate new generations even though they live forever and thus require no offspring to pass on their story.[52] Indeed, Gomez's black lesbian vampire protagonist relies on these blood bonds to stay sane across the centuries. Family also functions as a stabilizing force for *lougawou* who would normally isolate themselves and prey on the young (Hopkinson "Greedy Choke Puppy"). A final translation for *lougawou*, then: vampire.

In this sense of sacrificial or sustaining relationships between children and their elders, "The Devil In The Details" qualifies as a *lougawou* story. Denied an education in her heritage, the hasty Anna did not know enough to ask the price of the love powder she applies daily in advance; she gets her man, but at the cost of her first-born son. When she appeals to the *lwa* to save him, it becomes a bit of a *zonbi* story. Raised to be a good Catholic girl, Anna seeks not only to reclaim her child from the conjurer, but her own heart and mind from those who colonized her country. As the *zonbi* demonstrates, healing is possible even under grave circumstances. In contrast to the specialized knowledge required to make one, reversing the physical condition and restoring its victim's memories is simple. You only have to feed them a single, everyday ingredient: salt (Gadsby 41). Salt has a variety of significances; we can contrast it with sugar's sweetness and stench of slavery and note that salt rubbed into a *lougawou*'s shed skin will prevent them from slipping it back on after a night spent outside its confines. In great

[52] See Gumbs.

pain, the creatures reportedly cry "'kin-kin, you don't know me?"[53] Thus, salt reminds *zonbi* who they were and stops *lougawou* from claiming to be what they are not.

Anna directs her prayers to Ezili Dantò, a *lwa* who like the *lougawou* is mutually dependent on her children. To prevent her from disclosing secrets, the spirit's tongue was cut out during the struggle for independence. Even when she mounts a human with a fully-functioning mouth, she must rely on her son to take up residence in another person present at the ceremony and act as interpreter. Stephen Sondheim's witch reminds us, "children will listen"; we can go a step further and assert that "children will repeat."[54] However, children also have a choice about who to listen to and who to align themselves with. Rather than seeing Haitian Vodou as the bastard child of Catholicism and African Vodou, we can look at how the *lwa* both inherit and innovate identities. Assigned the names of saints to prevent colonizer scrutiny, they belong to different *nanchon* ("nations") based on which African rite (e.g. Yoruba, Ibo) they originated in. *Lwa* born on Haitian soil such as Ezili Dantò join the revolutionary ranks of a new *nanchon*, the Petwo.[55] While Haitians did not forget where they had been stolen from, they forged and fought for a new collective identity.

Such chosen families become a central theme of "And The Ants Will Tell" when the protagonist's bloodline is weaponized. Her opponent is able to reach her across a gulf of three hundred years as her ancestor. Lovely resents that he is related to her and tries not to let him get to her; she devotes attention instead to those she fights for and with. In contrast, the plot of "Here's The Devil's Number!" relies on the protagonist being receptive to messages. However, it

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[53] Hopkinson, qtd. in Anatol 139. See Anatol 221-252 for more discussion on what it means in terms of racial identity for the *lougawou* to shed its skin.
[54] Braithwaite discusses the child as both audience and narrator in Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber*; Glover (*Unbound*, 40) identifies a similar blurring of boundaries between narrator and character in Frankètienne's *Mûr à crever*.
[55] Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert 120. However, see Farris (cited in Brown 100) for evidence that elements of the Petwo rites are drawn from Kongo practices; reputation aside, even Petwo is not completely new.

also incorporates defiance of traditional authority. There is a superstition that notes left at crossroads can render their readers blind, but, luckily for us, our protagonist is the skeptical and nosy sort who does not heed his parents' warnings. The secret message turns out to be a rant about how people use social media to preach about a paradise to come instead of addressing present-day issues. As if to prove its point, the protagonist then receives a religious chain mail about blocking the devil's number. As a prank, he calls it and is intrigued when it makes his phone shut off. In need of a specialist who has devoted years of serious study to the arcane, the protagonist reaches out to a Free Mason. By wading through the distractions, taking risks, asking questions, and knowing the right people, he makes a breakthrough.

In all my linguistics classes on creole languages, I was reminded of a Toni Morrison quote: "The very serious function of racism is distraction…somebody says that you have no language and you spend twenty years proving that you do" ("A Humanist View, n.p.). Our project benefits from the labor of those who came before us. They put the infrastructure, including alphabets, school curricula, publishing houses, and even a spellchecker, in place for putting out books in Haitian Creole and have been doing it for a while now. Standing on their shoulders, we are able to move from justifying Haitian Creole as a literary language to the simple but still-radical act of writing in it.

The Mason says not to bother with the phone at all, echoing the note's hint about a coming transformation in how people talk to each other: "konpayi telefòn k ap bonbade limanite ak zouti sa yo mèt kòmanse ranje chita yo" ("the telephone companies that are bombarding humanity with these tools can start to take a seat"). This cryptic statement leads the protagonist to ask the Devil about the logistics of supernatural telecommunications. Although the Mason warns the protagonist that every conversation with the Devil will corrupt him further, the

protagonist ends the story excited to further investigate the possibility of calling up anyone, anywhere in the world for free. He would rather speak to even the Devil than get distracted by social media or pay a phone bill to a multinational telco.

Lovely in "And The Ants Will Tell" is also not tempted by fancy gadgets. At the risk of taking Audre Lorde's words too literally, the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. Although the story is set in the future, its characters are content to survive much as their rebel forebears did, sleeping on straw mats and using a fire to keep warm in their camp in a cave behind a waterfall. In addition to its sacred and historical significance, the location is also strategic: its curtain of falling water prevents insectoid spy robots from entering. When we refer to an invention as "revolutionary," we would do well to consider whether it is in fact useful to revolutionaries, for whom secrecy and loyalty are of the utmost importance.

Haitian Creole satisfies both criteria. During the Haitian Revolution, it served as a common language for constructing an identity and a code for concealing messages. However, creole languages are routinely dismissed as too simple by both linguists and laymen due to debates about their origins. The folk theory[56] is that creole languages come from pidgins. Pidgins themselves are not considered languages; they are merely approximations used as a last resort when people who do not share a way of speaking come into contact. One language serves as the main source of words, and a basic grammar is constructed ad hoc. The pidgin grows into a creole once children grow up speaking it as a mother tongue: these native speakers expand its vocabulary and syntax to express new concepts as they are exposed to them.

Even after this development, the new language may still be considered inadequate for communicating complex concepts, especially when compared to a European peer with whom it

[56] Sadly still espoused by some scholars; see McWhorter.

shares a lexicon. These attitudes linger because they uphold racism: by critiquing the way people speak, you can covertly critique the people themselves and the things they say. In an effort to push back against the simplified-grammar theory, some linguists have documented grammatical similarities between Caribbean creoles and the African languages spoken by incoming slaves. They argue that African languages served as substrates, giving their syntax to the new languages just as superstrates, the colonial languages, lent terms.[57] Once we recognize the role these African aunties had in their upbringing, we can dismiss the hypothesis that creoles were raised by a single, abusive European parent and with it the theory that their structure represents deprivation.

Even as we find similarities between them and their source materials, we should give creoles credit for creativity. When they appropriate European words, creoles engage in "biting the master tongue"[58]: as we have seen with translations throughout this project, knowing the meaning of a word's colonial language cognate does not guarantee that you will grasp all its creole connotations.[59] At the same time, celebrating creoles as vernaculars that hack the oppressor's terminology comes with its own issues. In a 2007 preface to the essay in which he coined the term "Afrofuturism," Dery wonders, "is there a place, in these days of Terrorist Futures and Total Information Awareness, for a naïve faith in guerilla semiotics?" (7). However, our faith need not be naïve so long as we continually examine what ends our means may be leading us to. To make meaningful change, do-it-yourself needs to become do-it-with-others. We

[57] See Lefebvre.
[58] Dery 13.
[59] Hopkinson reports, "a woman once told me that reading written Creole became easier for her when she stopped trying to identify the meaning of each individual word and instead read the text 'sideways.'" (*Whispers*, 298).

would also do well to recognize the gendered norms attached to hacker and maker culture; a quilt qualifies as a "techno-vernacular" object[60] as much as any motorcycle.[61]

Achille Mbembe's necropolitics takes a somewhat-sympathetic view of the so-feared suicide bomber: "one is free to live one's life only because one is free to die one's own death" (38). However, as George Washington advises in Puerto Rican Lin-Manuel Miranda's musical *Hamilton*, "Dying is easy, young man. Living is harder." The national myth of the masculine martyr can be dangerous. A father figure in *Krik? Krak!* becomes frustrated by his son's constant rehearsal of a Toussaint L'Ouverture[62] speech because he feels he can never live up to the revolutionary's standard of manhood (Morgan and Youssef 213). He ends up leaping from his boss's hot air balloon[63] to his death. The mother character embodies a more sustainable model: she helps the child practice his lines and lives to see him perform them.

Indeed, when asking ourselves whether a vision is practical,[64] we should consider not only physics and economics, but the concept of "practice." Rather than striving for disruption and domination, we can consider as practitioners what parts of the past and present we would like to pass on. Techniques that are familiar, tested, and already integrated into people's lives have a greater potential to be effective than exceptional, one-time events. Considering the brutal conditions under which it occurred, we could call creolization a "miracle,"[65] but if so it is a shockingly common one that took place across the Caribbean. By recognizing that creolization is

[60] Gaskins 30.
[61] Olson 199.
[62] Interestingly, Dessalines tends to be the more popular revolutionary figure among Haitians.
[63] Yes, this is arguably a steampunk story.
[64] Not to be confused with the "pragmatic." Here, "practical" takes cues from the 1969 French student movement graffiti proverb: "Soyez realistes; demandez l'impossible" ("Be realistic; demand the impossible").
[65] Trouillot, quoted and expanded upon in Price.

not so different from other processes of language contact, we can celebrate what happened in Haiti while not dismissing it as never-before-seen, never-to-be-seen-again.[66]

"Practice" also brings to mind *pratik*, the reciprocal, personal buyer-seller relationships[67] that hold the Haitian economy together and require reflection on what you owe and to whom. More than dead hero worship, Vodou offers practitioners their own significance as healers and maintainers of memory. Dayan proposes that the *lwa* represent remnants of people from the colonial period. Their needs were not met while they were alive, and they now "relocalize themselves as spirits and consumers, taking up space, greedy for goods, services, and attention" (258). However, one does not have to die to benefit from Vodou. While Vodou practitioners refer to themselves as *sevitè*, a term that recalls the French for "servant", the relationship is not so one-sided. As we saw with Ezili Freda, enacting rituals and erecting altars can provide a space for human expression. Her emphasis on performance is balanced by Ezili Dantò's love for laboring on her devotees' behalf.[68] For Dantò, discreet, consistent acts of care[69] can matter more than grand gestures.

The title "And The Ants Will Tell" alludes to the Haitian saying "even if I'm dead and buried, the ants will bring the news to me." This alternative method of recording events, in which the story is borne by tiny, coordinated creatures rather than entombed in a mausoleum or enshrined in a museum, calls us to question what counts as history. The story lingers on Lovely waking up beside her man and getting ready for her assault on the capital, capturing her as a partner in a moment of domesticity, rather than a solitary leader in the midst of the attack itself.

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[66] DeGraff's "Against Creole Exceptionalism" takes up this viewpoint; see also Aboh and DeGraff.
[67] Morgan and Youssef, "Bat Tenèb", 106.
[68] Omise'eke 65.
[69] Or, after the Bob Marley song, "small axe."

In portraying a feminine, collective movement, the author offers us an alternative path to masculine martyrdom for moving forward.

The "games black people in all Western cultures play with names and naming"[70] become crucial. The Haitian capital has been renamed Ash-ton, a reference to the "Trustees of Nations" coalition that now rules the city; Lovely frames her mission as one of changing it back. Lovely's accomplices insist on calling her by her boyfriend's last name, Mrs. Mapou. Although this practice may seem patriarchal at surface-level, it turns out to be a tool that Lovely can use to identify comrades. Because they never address her by her first name, Lovely can recognize when it is her enemy from the past speaking. Meanwhile, her first name functions as the fulfillment of a matriarchal prophecy: "What the mother gives is quite lovely." By documenting affiliations, names guide guerillas and prevent them from turning into lone wolves or lone survivors.

Similarly, this paper's title marks alliances. Originally a phrase in "Hinche In Parentheses" used by the police to emphasize the matter must be handled with care, it translates to "this story is not *senp*." *Senp* literally means "simple." In opposition to its English connotation of "feeble-minded," it can be a compliment in Haitian Creole. When a close friend used it to describe me in a recommendation letter, she meant that I am low-maintenance. *Senp* can also mean "single"; this alternate translation, "this isn't a single story," is suiting for our collection and the communal spirit expressed in its stories. It also calls to mind Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's discussion of "the danger of a single story" and the importance of representation in our imagined worlds. Finally, *senp* refers to "ritual action, ritual gesture and words [having a supernatural effect], incantation."[71] I appreciate the cheekiness of stating from the beginning that

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[70] Gilroy 203.

[71] *Haitian Creole-English Bilingual Dictionary*, Indiana University Creole Institute, 2007. Special thanks to David Way, who took a photograph of this page for me.

these Afrofuturist stories are not magical. Our title also challenges anyone who still believes Haitian Creole's limited lexicon prevents it from functioning as a literary or scientific language. These doubters should take a second look at *senp* and its multiple, spiralist meanings and realize it is not as simple as it seems.

Conclusion

The figure of the spiral is evocative enough to apply, retroactively, to previous sections of this paper. In their meandering, spirals recall the peregrinations of one of Glissant's errants. They also remind us of the hurricane as a fluid, transatlantic[72] alternative to narratives of feminine,[73] landed rootedness. "How To Empathize With A Zombie," an article title that speaks directly to questions raised in the Body section of this paper, urges "commitment to unresolved tension, incarnated both in the living-dead status of the zombie and in the physical form of the spiral" (Glover, *New Narratives*, 202). This open-endedness comes into play in this project's stories.

Our stories are more about missed connections than established relationships, and they tend to end before the character has a chance to take a suggested direction. Olivier might go after Amos, Yeyela must confront Momoyole, and Papè will try to regain Azoubwèt's affection, but we do not get to see them do it. As writers, we briefly debated whether leaving things up in the air in the end was irresponsible, but we concluded that in some senses it is better than settling. As critical dystopias, these stories "allow both readers and protagonists to hope by resisting closure" (Baccolini 18). We could also label them as "pragmatic utopianism" that offers a vision for how the world could be but does not fulfill it (Peel 53). Either way, these stories operate as a challenge rather than a promise.

As they shared stories with each other and with me, authors jokingly asked when they would have a chance to see "my" story, and I began thinking about this text as its own speculative narrative of sorts. Manipulating *comprendre*, the French for "to understand" derived from *comprehendere* (lit. "to take with", "to seize"), Glissant arrives at "donner-avec" ("gives-

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[72] Watanabe 252.
[73] As Barr points out, only female names were used for hurricanes until recently ("On The Other Side", 24). Haitian female author Lahens saw Haitian women as sending dispatches from "within the eye of the hurricane" (qtd. in Nzengou-Tayo 48).

on-and-with").[74] My hope is that in interpreting the eleven pieces that emerged for this project, I build on them rather than taking away from them. I take cues and heart from Omise'eke's confession about her own creative process: "Often I *haven't* managed to draw all thought lines together; and that unresolved plurality, too, became part of following the fractal mode of theorizing that is Ezili" (148-149). *Donner-avec* involves learning to live with incompleteness and in-betweenness; throughout this project, I have doled out information on a need-to-know basis. I do not tell you in the beginning that *lougawou* are vampires as well as witches and werewolves or that *zonbi* can be all of the above: zombies, angels, and ghosts. By instead focusing on each of these facets in turn through the Body-Land-Family framework, I emphasize that this text functions largely as an examination of concepts and creatures, rather than a perfect translation.

[74] Betsy Wing (xiv) in the translator's introduction to Glissant's book. The translation is also hers.

Appendix

A list of my supplementary readings is below. Titles in bold were featured in the workshops, either in their entirety or as excerpts.

Short Stories	
Title	Author
22XX: One-Shot	Jelani Wilson
A Brief History of Nonduality Studies	Sofia Samatar
A Fine Specimen	Lisa Allen-Agostini
A Starlit Night	Kofo Akib
A Strange Story	Ida Faubert
A White House With Pink Curtains in the Downstairs Windows	Jan J. Dominique
Aftermath	LeVar Burton
Aftermoon	Tananarive Due
Amma	Charles R. Saunders
Amour Sele	Gary Victor
Amours D'Outre Tombe	Gary Victor
Amphibian Attack	Afolabi Muheez Ashiru
Ananse Meets Peter Parker At The Taco Bell On Lexington	Douglas Kearney
Angel Song	Dave de Burgh
Angels and Cannibals Unite	Greg Tate
Animals on the Run	Okey Egboluche
Annihilation	Chiagozie Fred Nwonwu
Ark of Bones	Henry Dumas
Asuquo or The Winds of Harmattan	Nnedima Okorafor
Aswafiang	Gary Victor
At Life's Limits	Kiini Ibura Salaam
At the Huts of Ajala	Nisi Shawl
Aye, and Gomorrah…	Samuel R. Delany
Azania	Nick Wood
Barbancourt Blues	Nick Stone
Bèl Fanm	Gary Victor
Bio-Anger	Kiini Ibura Salaam
Bitter Grounds	Neil Gaiman
Black Angel	Walidah Imarisha
Black No More	George S. Schuyler
BLACKOut	Jill Robinson
Bludgeon	Thaddeus Howze

Brandy City	Mia Arderne
Buddy Bolden	Kalamu ya Salaam
Buried Statues	Antonio Benítez-Rojo
Butta's Backyard Barbecue	Tony Medina
Buying Primo Time	Wanda Coleman
Can You Wear My Eyes	Kalamu ya Salaam
Cause Harlem Needs Heroes	Kevin Brockenbrough
Châtiments	Gary Victor
Chicago 1927	Jewelle Gomez
Children of Heroes	Lyonel Trouillot
Children Who Fly	Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha
Claire of the Sea Light	Edwidge Danticat
Claws and Savages	Martin Stokes
Closing Time	Liam Kruger
Cold Fusion	Ayodele Arigbabu
Coming Home	Rayo Falade
Cooking Creole	A.M. Dellamonica
Corona	Samuel R. Delany
Culling the Herd	C. Renee Stephens
Daddy Mention and the Monday Skull	Andy Duncan
Dame Marie	Marilène Phipps-Kettlewell
Dances with Ghosts	Joseph Bruchac
Dangerous Crossroads	Louis Philippe Dalembert
Danse Vénézuélienne	Gary Victor
Death's Dreadlocks	Tobias S. Buckell
Deep End	Nisi Shawl
Deklete	Gary Victor
Delhi	Vandana Singh
Desire	Kiini Ibura Salaam
Détritus Ballet	Gary Victor
Devil Beads	Marina Ama Omowale Maxwell
Élie et l'homme aux grandes cornes	Gary Victor
Evidence	Alexis Pauline Gumbs
Fantôme Sur Facebook	Gary Victor
Fate	Jenise Aminoff
Fées des Dents	George S. Walker
Fire on the Mountain	Terry Bisson
Five Sets of Hands	Cristy Zinn

Four Eyes	Tobias S. Buckell
Future Christmas	Ishmael Reed
Galipòt	Gary Victor
Ganger (Ball Lightning)	Nalo Hopkinson
Gimmile's Songs	Charles R. Saunders
Good Boy	Nisi Shawl
Greedy Choke Puppy	Nalo Hopkinson
Griots of the Galaxy	Andrea Hairston
Guérisons	Gary Victor
Gwo Pye	Gary Victor
Heading South	Dany Laferrière
Heartspace	Steven Barnes
Heresy	Mandisi Nkomo
Hollow	Mia Mingus
Home Affairs	Sarah Lotz
Homing Instinct	Dani McClain
Hôtel Des Vivantes	Gary Victor
How Sukie Cross De Big Wata	Sheree Renée Thomas
Hussy Strutt	Ama Patterson
I Left My Heart in Skaftafell	Victor LaValle
ibo landing	ihsan bracy
In Spite of Darkness	Alixa Garcia
In the Beginning	Lillian Allen
In the Belly of the Crocodile	Minister Faust
Jesus Christ in Texas	W.E.B. Du Bois
Jingle bell	Gary Victor
Journey Into The Vortex	Maya Khankhoje
Just A Lark (or The Criypt of Matthew Ashdown)	Roger McTair
Kafka's Last Laugh	Vagabond
Kidnapping	Gary Victor
Krik…Krik…Krik…!	Gary Victor
La Chambre De Sang	Gary Victor
La chorale de sang	Gary Victor
La Disgrâce D'Apollon	Gary Victor
La Femme Idéale	Gary Victor
La Gifle	Gary Victor
La Langue	Gary Victor
La Main	Gary Victor
La Maison Qui Aimat Les Femmes	Gary Victor

La pipe de Sainsou	Gary Victor
La Piscine	Gary Victor
La queue de Corneille Saisson	Gary Victor
La Sieste	Gary Victor
L'Abominable Commerce De La Monsieur Tortue	Gary Victor
Lalibela	Gabriel Teodros
Lark Till Dawn, Princess	Barth Anderson
Le Caleçon	Gary Victor
Le Cas Nular	Gary Victor
Le Chat	Gary Victor
Le Dernière Pluie	Gary Victor
Le Fauteil Roulant	Gary Victor
Le Fémur	Gary Victor
Le Gardien De La Jarre	Gary Victor
Le Locataire	Gary Victor
Le Mouton	Gary Victor
Le Paradis Fissuré	Gary Victor
Le Peigne De Pleine Lune	Gary Victor
Le programmeur	Gary Victor
Le Retournement	Gary Victor
Le Sorcier Qui N'Aimait Pas La Neige	Gary Victor
Le Souffle	Gary Victor
Le Tout-Puissant	Gary Victor
L'Enjeu	Gary Victor
Les Fantômes	Gary Victor
Les Neuf Boeufs	Gary Victor
Les noix de coco	Gary Victor
Les Proies Du Diable	Gary Victor
Les Revenants	Gary Victor
Les Vingt-Quatre Trônes	Gary Victor
Les Vingt-Quatre Trônes L'Apocalypse	Gary Victor
Life-pod	Vandana Singh
Like Daughter	Tananarive Due
Lingua Franca	Carole McDonnell
Little Brown Mouse	Tunde Olaniran
Live and Let Live	Linda Addison
Ma Femme-Rêve De La Terrasse	Gary Victor
Mad Fish	Olive Senior
Maggies	Nisi Shawl

Maléfices	Gary Victor
Maléfices Égarés	Gary Victor
Maloulou	Marie Lily Cerat
Mango Republic	Terh Agbedeh
Manhunters	Kalamu ya Salaam
Masquerade Stories	Chiagozie Fred Nwonwu
Menu larcin	Gary Victor
Mercy at the Gate	Marie Ketsie-Theodore-Pharel
Mèt Minui	Gary Victor
Metal Feet	Temitayo Olofinlua
Mindscape	Andrea Hairston
Monstro	Junot Díaz
Moom!	Nnedi Okorafor
My Funny Valentine	Kamau Brathwaite
My Grandmother's Tale of the Buried Treasure and How She Defeated the King of Chacachacari and the Entire American Army with the Venus Flytraps	Robert Antoni
My Mother	Jamaica Kincaid
Native Aliens	Greg van Eekhout
Necahual	Tobias S. Buckell
New Mwanzi	Ashley Jacobs
Northern Lights	Eden Robinson
Notes From A Writer's Book of Cures and Spells	Marcia Douglas
Notes from Gethsemane	Tade Thomspon
Nuit De Chance	Gary Victor
Odette	Patrick Sylvain
Ofe!	Rafeeat Aliyu
Old Flesh Song	Ibi Aanu Zoboi
Once on the Shores of the Stream Senegambia	Pamela Mordeca
One Hundred And Twenty Days of Sunlight	Tade Thompson
Oresca	Paulette Poujol Oriol
Othello Pop	Andaiye Reeves
Out of Sync	Ven Begamudré
Panopte's Eye	Tamai Kobayashi
Paradise Inn	Kettly Mars
Pêche Téléphonique	Gary Victor
Pilon	Gary Victor
Planet X	S.A. Partridge
Pot O' Rice Horowitz's House of Solace	Ian McDonald

Pour L'Amour De Pierre Moralès	Gary Victor
Preface to the Life of a Bureaucrat	Jacques Roumain
Propostion 23	Efe Okogu
Protected Entity	Daniel José Older
Protection Rapprochée	Gary Victor
Rachel	Larissa Lai
Recovery From A Fall	David Findlay
Refugees	Celu Amberstone
Ret Chita	Gary Victor
Rêve Haitien	Ben Fountain
Revolution Shuffle	Bao Phi
Rhythm Travel	Amiri Baraka
Rosamojo	Kiini Ibura Salaam
Runway Blackout	Tara Betts
Sacrifice	Gary Victor
Sanford and Sun	Dawolu Jabari Anderson
Separation Anxiety	Evie Shockley
Shadows Move in the Britannia Bar	Ismith Khan
She'd Make A Dead Man Crawl	Gerard Houarner
Shining Through 24/7	devorah major
Silence.. On Tourne	Gary Victor
Sister Lilith	Honorée Fanonne Jeffers
Skin Dragons Talk	Ernest Hogan
Small and Bright	Autumn Brown
Soma	Camille Hernandez-Ramdwar
Spurn Babylon	Tobias S. Buckell
Surrender	Myriam J.A. Chancy
Sweet Dreams	Charles Johnson
Tasting Songs	Leone Ross
Terminal Avenue	Eden Robinson
Terminus	Gary Victor
Terms and Conditions Apply	Sally-Ann Murray
The African Origins of UFOs	Anthony Joseph
The Aphotic Ghost	Carlos Hernandez
The Astral Visitor Delta Blues	Robert Fleming
The Becoming	Akua Lezli Hope
The Binary	John Cooley
The Blue Hill	Rodney Saint-Eloi
The Blue Road: A Fairy Tale	Wayde compton

The Boyeur	Ran Walker
The Buzzing	Katerena Vermette
The Comet	W.E.B. Du Bois
The Death Collector	Silvia Mreno-Garcia
The Effluent Engine	N.K. Jemisin
The Enchanted Second Lieutenant	Jacques-Stephen Alexis
The Evening and the Morning and the Night	Octavia E. Butler
The Farming of Gods	Ibi Aanu Zoboi
The Finger	Gary Victor
The Foreigner	Uko Bendi Udo
The Forgotten Ones	Karin Lowachee
The Gift of Touch	Chinelo Onwualu
The Glass Bottle Trick	Nalo Hopkinson
The Goopherd Grapevine	Charles W. Chestnut
The Grassdreaming Tree	Sheree Renée Thomas
The Half-Wall	Rabih Alameddine
The Harem	Ibi Aanu Zoboi
The Homecoming	Chinelo Onwualu
The Horsemen and the Morning Star	Barbara Hambly
The Hungry Earth	Carmen Maria Machado
The Last of Its Kind	Kawika Guillermo
The Leopard of Ti Morne	Mark Kurlansky
The Living Roots	Opal Palmer Adisa
The Long Memory	Morrigan Phillips
The Mission	Marie-Hélène Laforest
The Parrot's Tale	Anil Menon
The Pavilion of Frozen Women	SP. Somtow
The Pillar	Farnoosh Moshiri
The Port-au-Prince Marriage Special	Edwidge Danticat
The Pretended	Darryl A. Smith
The Prowl	Gregory Frost
The Quality of Sand	Cherene Sherrard
The Rare Earth	Biram Mboob
the river	adrienne marie brown
The Runner of n-Vamana	Indapramit Das
The Sale	Tendai Huchu
The Skinned	Jarla Tangh
The Space Traders	Derrick Bell
The Taken	Tenea D. Johnson

The Tawny Bitch	Nisi Shawl
The Token Superhero	David F. Walker
The Trial	Joan De La Haye
The Village Cock	H. Nigel Thomas
The Woman in the Wall	Steven Barnes
Things I know About Fairy Tales	Roxane Gay
Three Letters You Will Never Read	Georges Anglade
To Gaze At The Sun	Clifton Gachagua
Too Many Yesterdays, Not Enough Tomorrows	N.K. Jemisin
Toot Sweet Matricia	Suzette Mayr
Trade Winds	devorah major
Trance	Kalamu ya Salaam
Trial Day	Tananarive Due
True Life	Michèle Voltaire Marcelin
Twenty Dollars	Madison Smartt Bell
Twice, At Once, Separated	Linda Addison
Un Aperitivo Col Diavolo	Darius James
Unathi Battles the Black Hairballs	Lauren Beukes
Uncle Obadiah and the Alien	Geoffrey Phillip
Une Heure Dix-Sept	Gary Victor
Une Homme D'Honneur	Gary Victor
Vol Direct	Gary Victor
Voodoo Vincent and the Astrostoriograms	Tyehimba Jess
Waking the God of the Mountain	Rochita Loenen-Ruiz
What the Periwinkle Remember	Marcia Douglas
When Scarabs Mulitply	Nnedi-Okorafor-Mbachu
Whipping Boy	Pam Noles
Whispers in the Dark	Walter Mosley
White Man's Trick	Eliot Fintushel
Widows' Walk	Opal Palmer Adisa
Will The Circle Be Unbroken?	Henry Dumas
Yahimba's Choice	Charles R. Saunders
Yurokon	Wilson Harris
Zombis Et Photocopies	Gary Victor
Films	
Title	Director
A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night	Ana Lily Amirpour
Arrival	Denis Villeneuve
Avatar	James Cameron

Beasts of the Southern Wild	Benh Zeitlin
District 9	Neill Blomkamp
Les Saignantes	Jean-Pierre Bekolo
Lilo & Stitch	Chris Sanders and Dean Dubois
Mad Max: Fury Road	George Miller
Pumzi	Wanuri Kahiu
The 6th World	Nanobah Becker
Vampiros En La Habana	Juan Padrón
Novels	
Title	Author
Akata Witch	Nnedi Okorafor
Binti	Nnedi Okorafor
Bizango	Sandra Cerine and Chevelin Pierre
Brown Girl In The Ring	Nalo Hopkinson
Crystal Rain	Tobias S. Buckell
Et Si On Envahissait Les U.S.A.?	Jean-Baptiste Schiller
Joplin's Ghost	Tananarive Due
Parable of the Sower	Octavia Butler
Parable of the Talents	Octavia Butler
Rodhus 57AX	Jean-Baptiste Schiller
Song Of Solomon	Toni Morrison
The Fifth Season	N.K. Jemisin
The Intuitionist	Colson Whitehead
Vilokan	Frantz Kiki Wainwright
Who Fears Death?	Nnedi Okorafor
Plays	
Dutchman	Amiri Baraka
Ti-Jean and his brothers	Derek Alton Walcott
Tears for Erzulie Freda	Claude-Michel Prévost

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