TOTAL ENCOUNTER: THEORIZING IMAGE-TEXT COLLABORATIONS FROM THE
FRANCOPHONE CARIBBEAN

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ABSTRACT

Emma Catherine Thompson Howell: Total Encounter: Theorizing Image-Text Collaborations
from the Francophone Caribbean
(Under the direction of Dominique Fisher and Jessica Tanner)

This dissertation highlights an understudied but vital engagement with the visual arts by some of the most influential writers from the Francophone Caribbean: Aimé Césaire, Patrick Chamoiseau, Frankétienne and Dany Laferrière. The liminal space produced by the encounter of image and text in the illustrated books, graphic novels, "Spirals" and *livres dessinés* I examine is a site where we can see other forms of exchange and creolization take shape. I contend that these types of transgeneric collaborations enact decolonial thinking in a way that is not achievable through text alone. These works destabilize arbitrary boundaries while questioning and re-presenting the nature of both intellectual property and historiography. My work draws connections among theories of creolization and *mondialité* from the Francophone Caribbean, decolonial thinkers from the Global South, and Black diaspora studies more broadly in order to argue for a more decentered conceptualization of authorship and authority. In turn, these collaborations propose visualizing history as multidirectional, relational, and falsely universalized. The Martinican writer and philosopher Édouard Glissant frames my discussion of how the reader/viewer's interpretive strategies operate, particularly through his idea of *Tremblement*: meaning trembling or quake, here used to name the positive chaotic vibration created from a relational way of thinking that connects everything to everything else without

establishing a linear directionality, filiation, or hierarchy. By looking through this lens of

collaborative authorship, we can see Glissant's philosophy of Relation in action.

To my parents, Bob Howell and Lynn Thompson, whose love for learning got me started,
and whose love for me got me through.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: A L(A) (R)ENCONTRE

> dehors une belle brume au lieu d'atmosphère serait point sale
> chaque goutte d'eau y faisant un soleil
> dont le nom le même pour toutes choses
> serait RENCONTRE BIEN TOTALE
> si bien que l'on ne saurait plus qui passe
> ou d'une étoile ou d'un espoir
> ou d'un pétale de l'arbre flamboyant
>
> - Aimé Césaire, "Corps Perdu"

First published in 1950 as a large-format limited edition, *Corps Perdu* presents a series of thirty-two etchings by Pablo Picasso that surround ten poems by the Martinican poet and politician Aimé Césaire. The African imagery across both text and image speaks to a longstanding tradition of mutual influence across the Atlantic. Raphaël Confiant understands Césaire's literary project as fundamentally transatlantic: "He worked on creating his personal oeuvre, against the backdrop of classical French literature, by aligning himself with the subversive tradition in French literature—Rimbaud, Lautréamont, Breton, and so on. Césaire's poetry is oppositional in the context of French literature, but it still defines itself in relation to that literature" (Taylor 144). Born in Spain, Picasso lived most of his life in France and was profoundly influenced by African art, which became a significant source of inspiration for the development of Cubism. He felt such a strong attachment to Afro-Cuban artist Wifredo Lam that he called him family: "Lam, je crois que tu as de mon sang en toi, tu dois être un de mes parents, un *primo*, un cousin" (qtd. in Maximin "Nous" 62).

These affinities also serve as a reminder that such exchanges were rooted in a historical moment of colonialism and primitivism, in which power imbalances threatened any idea of a mutual exchange into looking more like appropriation or mimicry, and ultimately a reaffirmation of European dominance: "The primitivist seeks both to be *opened up to difference*—to be taken out of the self sexually, socially, racially—and to be *fixed in opposition to the other*—to be established once again, secured as a sovereign self" (Foster 20). *Corps Perdu*'s title page alone, with the disparity in size between author and artist, speaks to an underlying imbalance, even if the explanations may have been purely commercial (i.e., Picasso was better known at the time and place of the publication). It is perhaps due to this particular moment and the dynamics within the work itself that the titular poem is regarded by Césairean scholar and translator Clay Eshleman as "Césaire's most jarring rollercoaster ride of the negritudinal self, turning and being turned by inner and exterior self and social forces" (986).

What makes this collaboration especially intriguing is the way it has also been reshaped by outside forces. The original text remained in relative obscurity until 2011, when it was included in Anne Egger's study *Césaire & Picasso: Corps perdu, Histoire d'une rencontre.* In the intervening decades, slightly revised versions of Césaire's poems were republished in the widely circulated collection of his poetry, *Cadastre* (first published in 1961, reprints in 1973, 1982, and 2006) with no mention of the images that originally accompanied them. In 1986, Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith published an English translation that, while including Picasso's etchings, used the poem ordering from the 1961 edition and reassigned several of the etchings to different poems, omitting one entirely. *Corps perdu*'s evolution compels us to reconsider our assumptions about authorship and authenticity: what we should consider as the definitive version and who can be considered part of the collaboration. Anca Cristofovici argues

that artists' books hold a unique position in regard to the aesthetic decisions of the paratext, making them "inseparable from a web of exchanges that include editor, translator, curator, conservator, or library custodian, who are instrumental in conceiving ways of handling and preserving these unusual objects, often not easy to shelf or display" (15). Picasso chose "Erasmus" as the typeface for the original edition, but apart from the Eshleman/Smith translation, no attention was paid to preserve that component of the work. Even the 2011 publication, which claims to reproduce "pour la première fois les poèmes de Césaire et les gravures de Picasso conformément à l'édition originale de 1950" made its own modifications: "Le texte a été recomposé et quelques pages blanches ont été supprimées."[1]

There are numerous examples of what is lost by looking solely at the text of this collaborative work, but I will limit myself here to two implications. Firstly, in the introduction to their English translation of *Corps perdu*, Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith cite Césaire's reference to "the full-grown girl" in "Who then, who then…" as "the first appearance in *Lost Body* of a shadowy feminine presence" (xiv). However, the presence is already existent in Picasso's etching of male and female forms in the first poem of the collection, "Mot." Secondly, Ronnie Scharfman, in a close reading of the text of "Corps perdu," examines the text's visual effect in these lines:

> je voudrais être de plus en plus humble et plus bas
> toujours plus grave sans vertige ni vestige
> jusqu'à me perdre tomber
> dans la vivante semoule d'une terre bien ouverte. (*Cadastre* 80)

Scharfman notes the overwhelming presence of the letter "v" and sees this as the subject's shift in position: "modulant son état narcissique d'indentification météorologique et topographique à

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[1] Eshleman and Smith give a detailed account of this font choice and even commissioned a typesetting company to create a font especially for this translation of *Corps perdu* that would mirror the original 1923 Erasmus font.

la terre vers le désir plus privé d'une auto-annulation à l'intérieur de la matrice protectrice du 'v' ouvert de la terre" (380). Picasso's etchings are never addressed in this article, but I would argue that this V-shape reverberates through all three images associated with "Corps perdu." What happens to these resonances between text and image when the original collaboration is disassembled? What is the role of the reader in connecting image and text and what is at stake when we process these two modes at the same time? How do we read the encounter of text and image within the context of the shifting power dynamics between the Métropole and its former colonies during the second half of the twentieth century?

A quintessential space of encounters, the contemporary Caribbean landscape has been built on the violence of conquest, slave trade, and colonization. By the same token, because of this history, it is a space where practices of resistance have always existed, whether thought of in terms of de Certeauian "tactics,"[2] the evasive maneuvering of *marronage,* or *parler en daki*, which Frankétienne explains as a way to convey two different meanings with one enunciation: "la parole à ce moment-là est porteuse d'une certaine ambiguïté […] il s'agissait pour les esclaves de communiquer entre eux en présence du commandeur et être compris" (Fleischmann 19). The centrality of the encounter—in all its forms—has led to the birth of Edouard Glissant's Relational thinking and one of his more repeated refrains: "Je peux changer, en échangeant avec l'Autre, sans me perdre ni pourtant me dénaturer" (Glissant *Cohée* 25). Creolization is seen not only as "des mélanges, des synthèses, des métissages, des hybridations de toutes sortes," but *also* "des diffractions, des antagonismes actifs, des oppositions, des conflits, des ruptures, dans une continuité désormais complexe" (Chamoiseau *Césaire* 79). The word "collaborator" has

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[2]A way to continue to express agency within a tightly controlled or monitored space, de Certeau will describe the role of the tactic as "jouer avec le terrain qui lui est imposé tel que l'organise la loi d'une force étrangère." (Certeau 60).

ambiguous connotations, as well, as either "a person who works together with others for a special purpose" or "a person who works with an enemy who has taken control of their country" ("Collaborator"). Exchange within the midst of this complexity has the potential to lead to unexpected and unimaginable connections, thereby creating something radically new.

It is the nature of this "total encounter"—or "rencontre bien totale" to take a line from the titular poem—between artist and author, text and image, self and other, which I examine across various forms of text-image collaborations from the 20th and 21st century Francophone Caribbean. My dissertation highlights an understudied but vital engagement with the visual arts by some of the most influential writers from this region: Aimé Césaire, Patrick Chamoiseau, Frankétienne and Dany Laferrière. The liminal space produced by the encounter of image and text in the illustrated books, graphic novels, "Spirals" and *livres dessinés* I examine is a site where we can see other forms of exchange and creolization take shape.

My choice of image-text collaborations in this context is rooted in Mary Gallagher's assertion that "the Caribbean situation lends itself exceptionally well to thinking that refers time to space" (59) due to the inseparable intersections between its history and its location in the world, as well as the temporal nature of the terms we use to speak of the "old world" against the "new world."[3] As a product of the encounter between artist and author, text and image, this bimodal genre is a space par excellence that proposes different relationships to time. Due to the at once creative and destructive process of these transdisciplinary collaborations, which build connections while destroying arbitrary boundaries, time represented spatially as a linear continuum becomes "unsettled." They make room for other spatial arrangements of time to exist.

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[3]Gallagher continues: "it is impossible to imagine the Caribbean past in non-spatial terms given that the mass genocide of the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean basin, and the subsequent waves of deportation and migration that deposited there its current population, have ensured that this past lies axiomatically elsewhere" (59).

The idea of displacement plays an essential role not only in how we read these collaborations differently, out of sync, but also in their most basic theoretical underpinnings: how they invite the reader into the collaborative process through the practice of interpretation. I offer Glissant's term of *Tremblement* as a starting point from which to examine their destabilizing effects. He describes an enormous flock of birds in *La Cohée du Lamentin*, whose trembling, shifting whole is linked together by its innumerable parts. This "oiseau innumérable" represents his idea of *Tremblement*: a type of relational theory that links everything to everything and creates a sort of positive chaotic *vibration*. The way of thinking in *Tremblement* "nous préserve des pensées de système et des systèmes de pensée… Elle nous réassemble dans l'absolue diversité, en un tourbillon de rencontres" (12). It is a way to visualize a whole that is not unified, or rather whose unifying bond is invisible, like the space that ebbs and flows around each bird in the flock.

The authors I examine have all struggled against essentializing identities. These collaborative gestures exemplify the ways they maneuver in order to expose their existence within diversity, contradiction, and encounter. Césaire's decision to pursue departmentalization in his political career, pitted against his poetic conceptualizations of Negritude, has drawn much criticism over the years. It may seem that Césaire's lofty poetic affirmations of a certain autonomy from Western oppression by way of Negritude contradict his apparent concession of the island to France through the 1946 law. However, critics such as Gregson Davis and Gary Wilder see Césaire's vision as poet and politician as fairly unified.[4] In fact, Wilder asserts that Césaire's "untimeliness" allowed him to "act 'as if' [he] inhabit[ed] a different historical moment, whether intentionally, as part of a political strategy, or unconsciously, as a symptom of

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[4]Davis argues that "a close reading of [Césaire's] poetic corpus and his published essays, such as the famous Discourse on Colonialism, supports an integrated view of his social thought and political practice" ("A flag").

a syndrome" ("Untimely" 106).[5] Chamoiseau and Frankétienne both look to dissect the stability

of naming, which is typically a marker of a fixed identity. Chamoiseau also calls himself "Oiseau

de cham" or the "marqueur de paroles." These pseudonyms create a greater distance between the

persona of "scribe" or "scratcher" and the author, Patrick Chamoiseau. Originally Franck

Étienne, the author-artist has combined his names and experimented with the addition or

subtraction of the *accent aiguë*. As a Haitian with very pale skin, born from the rape of his

Haitian mother by a white American, Frankétienne has also struggled against racial perceptions

of identity in relation to his homeland. Laferrière is constantly fighting against the labels that the

world tries to assign him, whether they be based on national identity, ethnicity, or literary genre.

He often claims he would much prefer to be known in the broadest terms as simply a "writer" of

"books."

Each collaborative work studied enacts the positive instability and resistance to absolutes

within *Tremblement*, so much so that the terminology surrounding them gets blurry. Can we

continue to reference "literature" or "texts" in works that include images; or speak of "art forms"

when text is involved? For authors who both write and draw, should we refer to them as authors

or artists? I alternate between the term "image-text" and "text-image" to avoid establishing a

primacy of one or the other. At the same time, the origin of these terms lies in *Picture Theory*,

W.J.T. Mitchell's seminal work on the inextricability of image from text in all forms. He uses the

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[5]In his book, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization and the Future of the World*, Wilder shows how the meaning of decolonization was shaped by the historical time period of post-World War and the intervention of the UN in independence movements to create a "nationalist logic of decolonization" (87) that would align decolonization with the emergence of a physical nation-state, an independent country that was once under colonial rule. The crux of Wilder's theory of Césaire's untimeliness rests thus on dismantling and expanding the meaning of decolonization. He asserts that Césaire and Senghor "did not reject humanism or universalism as such, only their actually existing liberal, republican, and socialist forms. Accordingly, they imagined a type of decolonization that would transcend the alternative between abstract humanism and territorial nationalism, while retaining the universalism of the former and the pluralism of the latter" (257).

nonhyphenated "imagetext" to refer to "composite, synthetic works (or concepts) that combine image and text" (89), and one of the book's central claims is "there are no 'purely' visual or verbal arts, though the impulse to purify media is one of the central utopian gestures of modernism" (5). In keeping the hyphen, I am highlighting Mitchell's definition of "image-text" as "designat[ing] relations of the visual and verbal" (89), but I am also signaling the inadequacy of the term which, combined or hyphenated, remains a composite of two binaries, whereas what it ultimately designates is a form that goes beyond the boundaries of both words.

Of course, these collaborative works are not the first to attack the linearity and uniformity of Time. The Dada and Surrealist movements, for example, experimented with visual art's relation to text and explored the temporalities of dream, or semi-dream states. What is unique about the artistic production from the authors I have chosen is that, by confronting influences from multiple cultural and literary traditions, it attempts to surpass what Édouard Glissant has referred to as "trajectories" going from either "the center to the peripheries," or "the peripheries to the center."[6] Even though Surrealism took influences from African art and cultivated the spread of primitivism, many of the figures we have come to associate with the movement were born into the Western tradition, only to turn against it from within (an example of a center that was moving toward the peripheries). The authors in this dissertation straddle the divide between inside and outside, therefore blurring the outlines of these two spaces.[7] *Éloge de la créolité* in

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[6]"[L]a trajectoire s'abolit ; la projection en flèche s'infléchit. La parole du poète mène de la périphérie à la périphérie, reproduit la trace du nomadisme circulaire, oui ; c'est-à-dire qu'elle constitue toute périphérie en centre, et plus encore, qu'elle *abolit la notion même de centre et de périphérie*" (emphasis added, *Poétique* 41).

[7]Frankétienne, as someone who has remained rooted in Haiti, has a different relationship to Franco-European tradition; however, Kaiama Glover sees him and his fellow Spiralists as still deeply engaged in a communication with the world outside Haiti: "For them, the fact of physical isolation in Haiti has by no means diminished their capacity to dialogue productively with elsewhere. […] The Spiralists straddle the supposed divide between militant Haitian modernism and cosmopolitan Creole postmodernism, despite their physical positioning within the strikingly closed space of the Haitian Republic" (*Haiti Unbound* 26).

fact speaks of Surrealism as a sort of gateway through which Césaire entered, while also making

it his own and never fully "ceding" to any hierarchy of influence.[8]

Drawing on decolonial thinking allows for a reading of Césaire's place both inside and

outside of Surrealism as not only possible, but also as a form of subversion. Decoloniality—

which offers itself not as a strict theory, but as an alternative to the inherent problems of the term

"post" in *postcolonial* or *postmodern*[9]—functions at the border of what Walter Mignolo calls

"modernity/coloniality." This combined term signals the violence of colonization as an integral

and inextricable component of modern society. Coloniality is "the darker side of modernity,"

(Mignolo *The Idea* xiii) without which modernity could not exist.[10] In bringing to light this

obscured quality of modernity, decoloniality is concerned with subverting power relations that

have developed between dominant and subaltern cultures: "Decoloniality, therefore, means both

the analytic task of unveiling the logic of coloniality and the prospective task of contributing to

build a world in which many worlds will coexist" (*Darker* 54). Thus, a decolonial approach will

not attempt to divorce itself entirely from the modernity/coloniality framework, but rather works

to find moments of "de-linking" from which other horizons of possibility are visible. In

examining what these collaborations do, I show how they engage with decolonial thinking, even

if unintentionally or anachronistically. Césaire identifies an element of this modernity/coloniality

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[8]The authors of *Éloge de la créolité* affirm: "With Césaire and Negritude we were steeped in Surrealism. It was obviously unfair to consider Césaire's handling of the 'Miraculous Weapons' of Surrealism as a resurgence of literary bovarism. Indeed, Surrealism blew to pieces ethnocentrist cocoons, and was in its very foundations the first reevaluation of Africa by Western consciousness. But, that the eyes of Europe should in the final analysis serve as a means for the rising of the buried continent of Africa, such was the reason for fearing risks of reinforced alienation which left few chances to escape from it except by a miracle: Césaire, thanks to his immense genius, soaked in the fire of a volcanic idiom, never paid tribute to Surrealism" ("In Praise" 888-9).

[9]In addition to the false nature of an assumed surpassing or "next level" in the term "post," Mignolo also emphasizes the importance of position, that is decolonial thinking was evolving out of Said's *Orientalism* (1978), the same year postmodernism was developing under *The Postmodern Condition* by François Lyotard (*Darker* 55).

[10]Mignolo also credits Arturo Escobar for the development of the "modernity/colonial research project."

in his discussion of ethnology as a "savoir blanc" that has been naturalized as universal: "C'est bien d'une connaissance qu'il s'agit. Mais d'une certaine connaissance. C'est une connaissance qui s'insère dans la ratio européenne et qui vient à son heure dans une certaine politique européenne. […] Autrement dit, un savoir périphérique qui occulte le Nègre autant qu'il le révèle" ("Genève" 28).

Form and Function

In his in-depth study of Glissant's "Archipelagic thought," Michael Wiedorn assesses the *structure* of Glissant's writing as a catalyst for the ideas he proposes within his essays. He argues that Glissant uses form as a way to dislodge our imaginary from its current systems of thought: "Glissant's speaking paradoxically, his asking us to think the impossible ("*Nothing is True, all is living*"), both represent a means of bringing about experimental change in readers, through shaking up and reformulating fundamental categories of thought" (*Think* 132). Challenging us to think the impossible has the potential to alter the landscape of our minds: "Glissant's texts encourage us to rethink our ideas, to rethink even the way we think or what thought might be capable of doing" (132). Wiedorn argues that it is Glissant's reliance on the poetic that allows him to relay these impossibilities and paradoxes. "Some ideas, for Glissant, can only be approached (read: neither grasped nor pinned down) through a chaotic, and perhaps impossible, literary melding of poetics and philosophy" (132).

My dissertation proposes we consider poetics in conjunction with images: how the text-image collaborative form mirrors Glissant's Relational thinking.[11] For the authors highlighted in

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[11]Most famously, that which "relie, relaie, relate" (*Cohée* 37). Because of its aversion to become "génralis[ée] par statuts et définitions de rôles discriminés" (*Discours antillais* 430), Relation is by its nature an open system, rather than a neatly defined and stagnant term. This way of thinking works more horizontally than the verticality represented by Genesis and a unified idea of lineage. Relation is tied to the space of the Antilles but not bound by them, positing itself as a cultural intertwining not to support any two opposing poles of "purity," but rather to

this study, the poetic is the bridge to escaping the rigidity of language systems into the image and

the possibility to think the "not-yet-thought." For Laferrière, it is at the heart of the difference

between his first career as a journalist and his role as a writer: "what's missing to give lasting

value to the text is poetry—in my case, that's style. […] Everything comes from a simple image

that you nourish with sentences" (Coates 913). This transformation is often expressed through

the connection between poetry and a certain kind of knowledge or *connaissance.* For Glissant,

there is a kinetic potential in the poetic form: "La poésie est le mouvement, par quoi l'homme

déplace les rapports entre les choses, les connaît et les totalise. Le poème est contact immédiat,

connaissance des choses et connaissance de soi" (*Intention Poétique* 109). Césaire's essay

"Poésie et connaissance" sees poetry as an embodied knowledge that comes from human

experience, as opposed to scientific "intelligence" that creates divisions between self and other.

The poetic form subsumes paradox: "Voilà résolues – et par l'état poétique – deux des

antinomies les plus angoissantes qui soient : l'antinomie de l'un et de l'autre, l'antinomie du Moi

et du Monde" (163). Chamoiseau's poetic text *Le papillon et la lumière,* illustrated by Ianna

Andreadis, presents a kind of oneiric Socratic dialogue in which the wiser speaker reveals the

difference between *re-connaissance* et true *connaissance* :

> Quand tu cherches, tu sais ce que tu cherches, sinon tu ne le chercherais pas ?
> Donc, ce que tu cherches tu le connais déjà, tu l'as déjà imaginé, et tu es déjà en train de
> l'espérer ?
> Dès lors, tu tournes en rond en trouvant ce que tu espères. Il y a là peut-être une re-
> connaissance, mais en tout cas aucune vraie connaissance.
> La connaissance survient d'abord dans ce que l'on est incapable d'imaginer, et qu'il nous
> a été impossible jusqu'alors d'espérer. (76)

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deconstruct those categories themselves (429). It is "non linéaire et non prophétique, tissée d'ardues patiences, de
dérivées incompressibles" (430). Glissant also links Relation to Time as neither should be relegated to the "pensée
de l'Un" (431).

Poetry allows for the unexpected connections that provide a way out of this cyclical search of the already imagined. When Frankétienne speaks of the poem as "lieu de rencontres et de ruptures fécondes" from which "quelque chose de neuf naîtra" (*Ultravocal* 317), he is appealing to a similar idea. We can understand the role of images in theses image-text collaborations as moments where language has reached its limits.

Images afford another way of accessing this knowledge, another way of seeing or understanding. Thinking in terms of the "affordances" of form, I'm drawing on Caroline Levine's use of the term: "Forms matter," Levine argues "because they shape what it is possible to think, say, and do in a given context" (5). A form in Levine's eyes can be anything from a prison cell to a poem; it provides both limits and possibilities for a certain space. "Rather than ask what artists intend or even what forms *do*, we can ask instead what potentialities lie latent— though not always obvious—in aesthetic and social arrangements" (6). For example, she argues that the role of dramatic form in *Antigone* is to compel us to "think anew about the power of hierarchies to organize our world" (Levine 93). Different forms allow us to (re)act differently, perceive differently, make different types of connections.

While collaborative forms can manifest in ways other than text-image, the image is of particular relevance to Glissantian thinking. Wifredo Lam and Roberto Matta are often cited as exemplary case studies in *Tremblement* and Relation. In addition to his numerous other pieces of art criticism, Glissant's own notebooks are full of sketches that visualize his thought process. Michael Dash in fact points to a passage of *L'Intention poétique*, in which Glissant describes his awkward attempt at drawing a tree whose ever-expanding top branches get cut off by the edge of the page. Dash reads Glissant's novel *La Lézarde* as a "tentative d'écrire spatialement la profusion et la multiplicité" ("Ni réel" 37) in a similar way to how the individual branches

towards the top of his tree seem to become one whole. For Dash, Glissant's sustained

engagement with visual arts is indicative of a practice that is always interrogating forms of

representation. Introducing image into text is a way for Glissant to reproduce an encounter with

otherness and the multiplicity of worldviews offered by Relational thinking:

> Not only does this relationship between graphic sign and poetic language further enhance
> the indeterminacy and intertextuality of Glissant's work, it seems to touch the question of
> the relationship between both the written poem and the graphic drawing and reality. That
> is, the drawings are not mere illustrations but may be complementary or alternative ways
> of designating reality. (Dash "Ni réel" 38)

Experimenting with this form of expression, whether in his art criticism, novels, or sketches in

his rough drafts, is a way to resist "systèmes de pensée." So, when Glissant says "Quand on

dessine une poétique de la diversité comme je prétends le faire, on ne peut pas parler du point de

vue de l'unicité" (*Introduction* 131), he is using the verb *dessiner* quite intentionally to reference

another way of thinking.

Christina Sharpe also takes up the question of form and what possibilities the image can

offer to conceptualizing other ways of being and thinking. In *In the Wake* (2016), she explains

she cannot help but read the word "imaging" doubly: as both "*imaging*, 'to make a representation

of the external form of,' and also as *imagining*, 'to form a mental image or concept of; to

suppose or assume; the ability to form mental images of things that either are not physically

present or have never been conceived or created by other'" (114). Imaging is vital to imagining

existence otherwise and imagining is vital to surviving and resisting oppression, or as Sharpe

says, to "re/seeing, re/inhabiting, and re/imagining the world" (22). Whereas Sharpe is concerned

with visual representations of Black bodies as a sort of redistribution of the sensible, I am

interested in expanding her emphasis on the image to include other visual disruptions of textual

landscapes.

While there is an expansive corpus of research surrounding these authors, many of the works I emphasize have not received the critical attention they deserve. Form acts as a double-edged sword; at once the catalyst through which authors and artists can propose other ways of seeing and being, it can also be the restraint that limits their own circulation. Everything from printing costs and the sometimes unwieldy design of these collaborations, to arbitrarily drawn but powerful disciplinary constraints have kept them in the shadows of each author's corpus. Laferrière's drawn books are somewhat different in that they were immediately released in both hardcopy and eBook editions. However, this wider accessibility comes with its own limitations, as the eBook restricts the kind of physical engagement that the book requires (some pages are laid out horizontally and some vertically, and text is written at different angles and sizes, compelling the reader to turn the book upside down and diagonally). I contend that it is precisely by looking through this lens of collaborative authorship, at the frontier between artistic and literary fields, that we can see Relational thinking in action. The works themselves are opening up a space for new connections to be made; as their authors push against the constraints of the written word, so too are we as readers forced to reexamine what lines have been drawn in the sand and by whom.

Globalization, the Universal and the Particular

Against the backdrop of *Tremblement*, I see these collaborations as particularly helpful tools in unpacking the relationship between the universal and the particular, an issue that has been at the heart of so many postcolonial debates. With the ever-increasing cross-cultural exchange of globalization at once bringing peoples together and threatening the erasure of their unique cultures, the complexities of how the universal, or global, should relate to the particular have spurred many questions: how does one reclaim a particular identity without becoming

exclusionist and essentializing? Conversely, how can one escape the potential homogenization

that shadows universality? And perhaps, more broadly: is it possible to escape such oppositional

categories of the universal/particular, the colonizer/colonized, the visible/invisible? Frantz Fanon

has defined the colonized world as "un monde coupé en deux" and posits that it is this

compartmentalization that leads to a dehumanizing of the colonized (*Damnés* 41). If the

colonizer is human, then it follows that the colonized cannot be. Achille Mbembe builds off

Fanon's argument to make the dichotomy one of presence and absence (not only can the

colonized not be human, he cannot *be* at all). He adds that with our increasing reliance on

neoliberalization and the expansion of globalization, humanity itself is on the path to this same

commodification-turned-absence, what he terms "le devenir-nègre du monde."[12] That is to say,

by placing a price on everything and everyone, modern-day neoliberal societies are transforming

all peoples into a new kind of trade in bodies.

Arjun Appardurai rejects both hierarchical and dichotomous systems when he affirms:

"The new global cultural economy has to be understood as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive

order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models (even

those that might account for multiple centers and peripheries)" (296). His approach is similar to

what Glissant defines as a dissolution of trajectories (*Poétique* 41). Glissant's idea of *mondialité*

is a way of existing within and against the homogenization of globalization (*mondialisation*), in a

total openness to a diversity that is "plus complexe que ne peuvent le signifier ces marqueurs

archaïques que sont la couleur de la peau, la langue que l'on parle, le dieu que l'on honore ou

celui que l'on craint, le sol où l'on est né" (Glissant and Chamoiseau 15). For Glissant,

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[12]"C'est cette fongibilité nouvelle, cette solubilité, son institutionnalisation en tant que nouvelle norme d'existence et sa généralisation à l'ensemble de la planète que nous appelons le *devenir-nègre du monde*" (*Critique de la raison nègre*, 17; italics in original).

globalization signals a standardization—a leveling by common denominator—that *mondialité* opposes. *Mondialité* accepts the contact of cultures brought about through a globalizing world in a way that preserves and values the totality of their diversity. *Tremblement* expresses this idea of *mondialité* in the way it constantly fluctuates, never allowing for any fixed identity or position.

Considering this relationship, Walter Mignolo's concepts of "local histories" against "global designs" are especially useful in delineating the multifaceted and silencing processes of colonization, which replaced a multiplicity of ways of being and interacting with the world with a single perspective originating from Europe (*Local Histories*). This local history thus became a global design; the inherent violence of this erasure becomes naturalized and therefore hides in plain sight. This process echoes the way Glissant characterizes globalization/*mondialisation* as "l'uniformisation par le bas, le règne des multinationales, la standardisation, l'ultralibéralisme sauvage sur les marches mondiaux" (*Cohée* 15). However, even though there are points of contact between Mignolo's "local" and Glissant's *mondialité*, the two conceptualizations of the "reverse side" of globalization are not identical. Glissant's *mondialité* is the enormous potential within the contact zone of cultures, languages, and peoples, particularly in the possibility of its existence as "à la fois multiple et un, et inextricable" (15). In emphasizing the "local," Mignolo tasks scholars to both collaborate with marginalized communities to expose the artificiality of the global design and grapple with what new horizons can be envisioned by starting from different positionalities. Through both their content and form, and through the internal movement of image and text, the collaborations I examine in this project attempt to escape the rigid, dualist thinking ingrained in globalization. The space of the collaborations themselves allows for a reevaluation of other understandings of Time and History. Each work is particularly interested in the question of time as it relates to a linear understanding of History as past-present-future, while

also engaging in a reimagining of how time functions within the space of the works themselves (for example, the simultaneity of "reading" text and image on the page, or varying temporalities created within the narrative structure).

Time, History, and Being in Relation

Drawing upon the work of Glissant and Michel-Rolph Trouillot in conjunction with decolonial thinkers such as Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vasquez will allow me to present a fuller backdrop to the problems of naturalizing the ideology of History and Time, that is to say, conceiving them as uniform and standard "givens." For Trouillot, it is imperative to understand the production of history in conjunction with power; those in positions of power determine what is or is not considered history. The scholarly field itself is constructed out of "mentions" and "silences," two active sides of the same coin: "the presences and absences embodied in sources […] or archives […] are neither neutral or natural. They are created" (Trouillot 48). The naturalized narrative of events—what is included and left out and *how* it is told—that has been propagated as the only narrative, is what Glissant refers to as "Histoire," as opposed to "histoires."[13] Like Fanon and Mbembe, Glissant's examination of the psychosocial *longue durée* effects of slavery and colonization notes the power of such a structure to strip away humanity. He identifies Martinican colonization in particular as a rather rare, but total, "success" of colonization's ability to "dépersonnaliser complètement une communauté, de l''absorber' dans un corps extérieur" (*Discours* 188-9). Glissant also credits colonization with imposing its structures where they do not belong: "L'une des conséquences les plus terrifiantes de la

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[13]Because the word "histoire" means both "history" and "story" in French, this distinction is all the more apt.

colonisation sera bien cette conception univoque de l'Histoire, et donc du pouvoir, que

l'Occident a imposée aux peuples" (276).

Adam Barrows's inquiry into the links among the modernist period, imperialism, and the

standardization of Greenwich Mean Time informs my discussion of how time has come to be a

global project. While Barrows deals only with European responses to this shift in understanding

time (we could say, reactions from inside the hegemonic structure), I examine the functions of

the "Time of Empire" to the Caribbean, as an outside space onto which this same system was

applied. Subaltern communities have often been relegated to positions "outside" of History and

time. When, for example, then President Nicolas Sarkozy remarked during a 2007 speech in

Dakar that "Le drame de l'Afrique, c'est que l'homme africain n'est pas assez entré dans

l'Histoire," he was speaking of the global design of a History created and maintained through

hegemony, even if he did not recognize it as such. The problem of statements like "Dans cet

imaginaire [africain] où tout recommence toujours, il n'y a de place ni pour l'aventure humaine,

ni pour l'idée de progrès" (Sarkozy) is that they impose Western ideologies and standards onto

other ways of being in the world.[14] The concept itself of "progress" or "development" carries

with it an assumed linear evolution and a system of valuation that places the West as the

intended finish line for other "developing" countries. Academia is complicit in this system, as it

has canonized certain authors over others and created divisions between fields of study. As

Mignolo will note: "Western people have disciplines and Eastern people have cultures to be

studied by Western disciplines" (*The idea* 36). The collaborative works of this project push

against the boundaries that separate art from literature, historical narrative from fiction,

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[14]The most problematic element of these statements is that the global design carried out by the West is so complete and totalizing that it often goes unnoticed by the speaker.

autobiography from collective memory. I aim to highlight the *movement*, integral to these collaborations, that combats the stagnancy of being understood as outside time and history. The goal is not to secede entirely from these institutions, but to decolonize them from the inside. The attempt to view decoloniality as an option with multiple possible horizons, instead of a fixed theory, is an attempt to "de-link" from the colonial matrix of power while acknowledging that outright escape is never an option.

For Glissant, the possibility of overlapping and contradictory histories is necessary to recapturing a particular relation to time and identity that has been occluded in the Caribbean: "Se battre contre l'un de l'Histoire, pour la Relation des histoires, c'est peut-être à la fois retrouver son temps vrai et son identité : poser en termes inédits la question du pouvoir" (*Discours* 276). A Relational approach to history involves not only a redistribution of power, but a reconsideration of what power is. His conception of Relation brings particular, sometimes contrasting, lived experience together under the umbrella of archipelagic thought, which links together without fully fusing or homogenizing.[15] Relation can serve to re-humanize a subject who has been dehumanized through coloniality. Returning to the epigraph of this chapter, we can read the image of fog with each droplet as its own sun in the context of the "total encounter" as a reflection of this poetic imagining of Relation. The conditional tense of Césaire's poem only serves to highlight the imaginative nature of such a possible future that breaks down distinctions between near and far, material object and concept (une étoile, un espoir, un pétale de l'arbre flamboyant).

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[15]As opposed to any negative connotations of insularity as being closed off, this interconnectedness across islands reflects a relational quality, while still maintaining the particular identities of each island space: "Dans la Caraïbe, […] chaque île est une ouverture […] l'imaginaire des Antilles nous libère de l'étouffement" (Glissant *Discours* 427). Dominique Diard's analysis of Glissant links the archipelago, Relation and the Tout-monde in "Regards en archipels."

Both Césaire's texts and Wifredo Lam's artwork have been described as attempts to attain a certain universal through the particularities of the Caribbean experience.[16] Chapter one explores how their collaborative work *Annonciation* (1982) reaches for this universality or totality, while undermining a traditional dialectic between text and image. The work unearths a collaboration on two levels: a submarine alliance both between the poet and the artist and between the poetry and the etchings. Through Glissant's ideas of *Tremblement* and Relation, we can find a way to view each composite part as sort of stepping stones in an archipelagic thought whereby an encounter between two entities does not inwardly destroy parts of either, but nevertheless no longer allows them to be understood as separate entities. The work resists an oversimplified, connect-the-dots method of analysis, while still inviting an interpretative practice. It encourages us to consider the necessary and important role of the reader/viewer to the fusion of the two pieces. It is this *process* of interpretation, not any definitive conclusion, that makes the back-and-forth dialogue function. I examine the museum space as one of the most fruitful sites where this interpretative act can manifest.

Just as we must read Césaire and Lam's collaborations as a totality, we must ascribe a similar symbiotic relationship to how we view the graphic novel genre. Thierry Groensteen argues that we should understand comics in general as a "system," instead of breaking them down into their smallest analyzable parts: "from then on, the problem posed to the analyst is not which code to privilege, it is to find an access road to the interior of the system that permits

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[16]For Césaire, see Doris L. Garraway, "'What Is Mine': Césairean Negritude between the Particular and the Universal," *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2010, pp. 71-86; and Charles Rowell, "It is Through Poetry that One Copes with Solitude: An Interview with Aimé Césaire," *Callaloo,* vol. 31, no. 4, 2008, pp. 989-97. For Lam, see Jacques Leenhardt, "Wifredo Lam: A Quest for the Universal"; and Alain Jouffroy, "Lam a fait danser sa pensée" *Wifredo Lam*, *XXème siècle*, vol. 52, July 1979, p. 90.

exploration in its totality so as to find coherence" (6). Chapter two examines the systems of meaning in two graphic novels written by Patrick Chamoiseau: *Les Antilles sous Bonaparte: Delgrès* (1981), illustrated by Georges Puisy, and *Encyclomerveille d'un tueur* (2009), illustrated by Thierry Ségur, as well as one illustrated by him: *Le Retour de Monsieur Coutcha* (1984), written by Tony Delsham. Chamoiseau is probably best known for his 1992 novel, *Texaco* and his contribution to theories of creolization in *In Praise of Creoleness*, alongside Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant. A quick glance at his oeuvre, however, reveals the wide-ranging nature of his artistic production and the varying ways he finds to incorporate the sensory into his texts. I draw on the inherent potential of the graphic novel form to "articulate the work of the imaginary as a domain of resistance" (Knepper 33) in order to imagine other ways of recounting history, constructing national heroes, and of reading across space and time. Groensteen has described this reimagining of time as the "narrative chain" of comics, "where the links are spread across space, in a situation of co-presence" (7). This form, which defies all attempts to impose upon it a fixed definition (Groensteen 12-7), is an essential component in my analysis of the kinetic instability of collaborations.

The Haitian artist and author, Frankétienne, serves as an example of what I am calling a "soli(d/t)ary" approach to collaboration; a "closed-circuit" synthesis of his own artwork and texts, his works elicit the most reader engagement and his artistic project strives for a radical connection with the Other. He is an extremely prolific, larger-than-life figure who lives to defy classification.[17] His defiance of spatial or temporal linearity through Spiralism[18] reinforces my

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[17]In his first novel, he writes: "Tout simplement j'écris. Parce qu'il le faut. Parce que j'étouffe. J'écris n'importe quoi. N'importe comment. On l'appellera comme on voudra: roman, essai, poème, autobiographie, témoignage, récit, exercice de mémoire ou rien du tout" (*Mûr à crever* 7).

[18]Glover describes the importance of the spiral to Frankétienne and the two other "founding members" of this movement, Fignolé and Philoctète: "From the structure of the double helix that defines every living being, to the swirl of stars, gas, and dust that compose the galaxy, the very foundations of the universe unfold in a spiral,

argument that these collaborations advance a reconceptualization of time and history. My third chapter reads *L'Oiseau schizophone* (1993) in its explosive disruption of the space of the page as both the most liberated and the most quarantined of Frankétienne's works. The image is central to the manifestation of the *soli(d/t)aire*. With the increase in Frankétienne's reliance on images comes an increase in the disjointed nature of text, the schizophonic splitting of sign from referent, and therefore the participatory work necessary from the reader to experiment with the multiple ways of piecing together and making meaning. *Mûr à crever* and *Ultravocal* set the foundation for the fullest implementation of such an experimentation in *L'Oiseau schizophone*, which through a multiplicity of times, languages, and correspondences between text and image imitates a cinematic-like movement in textual form. I read Frankétienne's concept of *psykinérama* through Gilles Deleuze's time-image as a way for *L'Oiseau schizophone* to work outside a system of representation and highlight the experimental qualities of thought. The time-image provides a "direct image of time," instead of a representational one, which "appears as a force that disrupts chronological space defined by exteriority, extension and continuity links" (Rodowick 186).

Chapter four opens up the idea of collaboration to look at Dany Laferrière's engagement with Haitian primitive painting. Many of his purely textual works have been ekphratic attempts at capturing the immediacy and the shift of perspective he identities in this artform. His recent series of *livres dessinés*, in which everything is drawn or written by hand, removes the mechanical intermediary of typewriter or word processor from the equation and therefore makes

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implicitly putting even the most dramatically isolated beings into relation. […]The spiral also explicitly informs the writing practice of the three authors on the level of content and form. It provides the point of departure from which they write the specificity of being and creating in Haiti. The very idea of the spiral recalls the foundations of the Caribbean oral tradition, according to which stories unfold cumulatively or cyclically; are relatively unconcerned with any purely narrative structure or horizontal, linear development; and are subject invariably to the frequent and spontaneous interventions of the public" (15).

this immediacy more accessible. I examine the first of these drawn books, *Autoportrait de Paris avec chat* (2018), as a way for Laferrière to exploit his affinity for the complexities of the word "primitif" most fully, including all of its colonialist and exoticizing baggage. Additionally, the compelling ambiguity of the title in regard to who or what exactly is the object of this "self-portrait" is a way for Laferrière to negotiate his growing public presence after his induction to the Académie française. The primary collaboration it offers us is one between Laferrière the reader and Laferrière the writer. Blurring the limits between text and image through handwriting reflects the symbiotic dynamic between his writing and reading practices. He uses the drawn-book form as a meeting space for the many authors and artists that have shaped his own writing practices, thereby exposing the creative process as fundamentally collaborative in nature.

CHAPTER 1: SUBMARINE CONNECTIONS: AIMÉ CÉSAIRE, WIFREDO LAM, AND THE KINETIC POSSIBILITIES OF NEGRITUDE

> Chez Wifredo Lam, la poétique du paysage américain (accumulation, dilation, chargé du passé, relais africain, présence des totems) est dessinée.
>
> - Édouard Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*

In an homage entitled *Ce que je dois à Aimé Césaire*, author Jacques Lacarrière spins an intricate web of creativity and influence in an attempt to explain how the work of Aimé Césaire has affected his own writing. Lacarrière compares Césaire to Renaissance poets Maurice Scève, Joachim du Bellay, Ronsard, and Malherbe, while also examining the instrumental relationship between Césaire and his contemporary, André Breton. The book is punctuated by seven line drawings from the Cuban artist, Wifredo Lam, but despite all of his other references, Lacarrière never once mentions the relationship between Lam and Césaire that spanned four decades and several continents. In fact, Lam's name never even appears in the text, save the illustration credits. In presenting this relationship somewhat furtively within his own exploration of influence, Lacarrière seems to have in fact accurately represented the nature of what was a mutually influential bond between Lam and Césaire that has nevertheless remained in the shadows of literary and artistic criticism.[1] So much scholarly attention has been paid to Aimé Césaire's poetic, theatrical, and philosophical oeuvre as an individua, that one must wonder why

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[1] In 2003, Césaire agreed with interviewer René Hénane that his favorite painter was Wifredo Lam, later adding Martinican painter René-Louise, who has produced several works inspired by the poet ("Témoinage").

his collaborations with artists have gone relatively overlooked and/or undervalued by literary scholars.[2] Lam is known as both an individual and a collaborative artist, but very little attention has been paid to his work with Césaire. How are we to read and interpret such an elusive, and at times deeply intimate, dialogue that produced little in the way of concrete evidence—in the form of published works—of its existence?

It is this submarine quality of their relationship that I wish to explore, alongside the one produced by text and image.[3] The artistic production coming out of the Caribbean in the mid-twentieth century was laden with colonial baggage; as former colonies became departments and independence movements gained momentum, there still existed strong bonds of mutual intellectual exchange between the Caribbean and the West. The collaborations addressed in this chapter exemplify the contested place of European influence to the two men. Both are rooted in the space of the Caribbean, while maintaining strong connections to the continent (both having studied extensively abroad). Additionally, the form their collaborations take is based on the tradition of the illustrated artist's book that spread throughout Europe during the first half of the 20th century.[4] The place of Surrealism becomes a quasi-obsession in critical literature surrounding both men's work, the problematic repercussions of which I will return to in more

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[2]In addition to his two works with Lam, Césaire's other collaborations include *Corps Perdu* (1950) with Pablo Picasso, *Asculter le dédale* (1991) with Medhi Qotbi, as well as *Batouque* (1989) and *Configurations* (1993) with Jean Pons. *Florilège* was published in 2005 with seven lithographs from Jean Pons and seven of Césaire's poems selected by Jacqueline Leiner. Césaire's oeuvre has also inspired many visual complements post-publication. In an article in the online journal *Mondes francophones*, René Hénane names Simone Boisecq, René-Corail, René-Louise, Victor Anicet, and Ernest Breleur as artists who have created pieces directly inspired by Césaire's writing. Hénane also mentions the exposition *Aimé Césaire, La force de regarder demain,* under the direction of Annick Thébia-Melsan, which was inaugurated at the Sommet francophone de Cotonou (November 1995), traveled to the Cinquantenaire de l'UNESCO (Dakar, Abijan, Paris, 1996) and then to Fort-de-France with pictorial additions, entitled *Aimé Césaire, Pour regarder le siècle en face.*

[3]In speaking of "submarine" connections, I am thinking with Kamau Brathwaite's assertion that in the Caribbean, "the unity is submarine" (64).

[4]Johanna Drucker positions the artist's book as the "quintessential 20th-century art form." *The Century of Artists' Books*, Granary Books, 2004, p. 1.

detail later. On the surface, what unites the Surrealists, Césaire, and Lam is their common grounding in *revolt* against a traditional European mindset.[5] This chapter will focus on two byproducts of this revolt: the methodology of collaborating across media and the affirmation of the unstable, inconsistent nature of the imagination (including its yet-to-be-discovered possibilities).

Césaire and Lam's artistic collaborations, which cross temporal and geographic boundaries, provide a space for the reader/viewer to actively participate in the interpretive process, making unique connections between the two mediums. I argue we need to pay more attention to the intrinsic movement of such participation; for example, one that happens when the reader's brain makes unexpected connections while it is processing multiple "languages" (text versus image, for example). Movement is an intrinsic priority within the European surrealist practice. Werner Spies describes the "image-collision" of the early surrealist rapport between text and image like *Les Malheurs des immortels* (Max Ernst and Paul Éluard, 1922) or *Nadja* (André Breton, 1928) as a "subtle *gymnastics*." Spies writes: "la signification première d'un terme est annihilée, le rapport causal entre les mots est si *bousculé* qu'il déraille littéralement. Rivalisant d'audace, les textes dépassent les images, et les images dépassent les textes, sans que jamais les uns soient assujettis aux autres" (emphasis added, 18-19). Breton describes the text-image relation as a springboard: "Les mots, les images ne s'offrent que comme *tremplins* à l'esprit de celui qui écoute" (emphasis added, *Manifeste* 51). The emphasis on the reader's participation is clearly evoked in both the image of the springboard and in Spies' "jostling." It is

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[5]For examples of how the specific term "revolt" appears in different texts about surrealism, Césaire and Lam, see Annick Thébia-Melsan, editor, *Aimé Césaire: pour regarder le siècle en face*, Maisonneuve et Larose, 2000, p. 28. See also Roger Garaudy, "Aimé Césaire, poète de la colère," *L'Humanité*, 24 Aug. 1946. Garaudy cites Césaire's character in *Les Chiens se taisaient*, Le rebelle, when he says "c'est moi avec ma révolte et mes pauvres poings serrés et ma tête hirsute" to make the case that Césaire goes above and beyond the Western surrealism of André Breton.

the reader whose system of causality between words and images is disjointed, the reader who "listens."

The reader is not the only "extra" participant in these, and many other, collaborations. In addition to paratext and translators, there are publishers, editors, and museum curators, all who have a say in how the work is presented to the public, how the images are displayed, with or without the text. All of these intermediaries work to *jostle* the collaboration loose from its original creators. Lam confirms this idea of painting as a sort of call to its audience: "un tableau est une proposition faite aux autres. Un vrai tableau c'est celui qui possède le pouvoir de faire travailler l'imagination" (Thébia-Melsan 72). His visual contribution helps to open up the collaboration as a sort of proposition to put our imagination to work. Therefore, what I am interested in is not as much authorial intention, or even pinning down a "definitive" interpretation. Rather, I am looking at the way the text-image relationship functions outside of the control of either artist or author: the interpretive process itself, the intertextual references, and what kind of work is being enacted within our own imaginary.

Paying attention to the internal movement of interpretation and the external movement of influences, we cannot help but recall what Edouard Glissant refers to as Relational thinking, most personified in his concept of *Tremblement*. Even though Césaire and Glissant have traditionally been seen on a quite linear continuum in Francophone Caribbean philosophical thought (with Césaire's thinking distinctly preceding Glissant's), I propose we look at this particular manifestation of Césaire's work as a Relational practice. Doing so will allow us to unburden Césaire's conception of Négritude of the critics who claim it is either essentializing or relegated to a certain moment in time. Even though Lam is not traditionally considered part of the Négritude movement, one of his most widely cited interviews resonates deeply with the spirit

of revalorization that Negritude espoused, as well as its potential elitist limitations: "Je voulais de toutes mes forces peindre le drame de mon pays, mais en exprimant à fond l'esprit des nègres, la beauté de la plastique des Noirs. Ainsi, je serais comme un cheval de Troie d'où sortiraient des figures hallucinantes, capables de surprendre, de troubler les rêves des exploiteurs. Je courais le risque de n'être compris ni par les hommes de la rue ni par les autres" (qtd in David, 27)[6]. I will look at two works co-authored by Césaire and Lam that stretch the limits of traditional collaboration: Lam's illustrations to Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal,* and Césaire's poems that accompany a series of etchings by Lam to form the series *Annonciation.*

Building Connections: From *Cahier* to *Retorno*

Césaire's seminal work, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, treats the specificities of his Martinican homeland. It infuses the universal with the personal through its first-person narrative and its designation as a "notebook." Already from the title, we are faced not with a polished, finished product, but rather a work in progress. A notebook belongs quite directly to its author, with no other intermediaries. In fact, even its first publication was not through a traditional book publisher, but in the journal *Volontés*. *Cahier* went through several major revisions, creating a somewhat contested conversation among scholars as to the "definitive" version, including what it means for the text to possibly not exist in that state.[7] It is noteworthy that the first bound book edition of the text came in 1942 under the title, *Retorno al pais natal*, translated by Lydia Cabrera and containing three illustrations from Wifredo Lam. Only 200 printings of this rare

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[6]Robert Linsley classifies Lam's work as "an alchemical mixture of Third World liberation, Surrealism and Negritude" (527).

[7]See A. James Arnold, "Césaire's *Notebook* as Palimpsest: The Text before, during, and after World War II," *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2004; or Alex Gil, "Bridging the Middle Passage: The Textual (R)evolution of Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, March 2011, pp. 40-56.

collaboration exist, but Lam's legacy remained with *Cahier*, as he contributed a different painting to the frontispiece of the subsequent, much more widely circulated 1947 English-French bilingual Bordas edition.

Being published immediately in two translations in fact mirrors the content's attempt to seamlessly link the intimate or singular to the universal and communal. It is not just in the commonly cited prophetic voice of the narrator when he says: "Ma bouche sera la bouche des malheurs qui n'on point de bouche, ma voix, la liberté de celles qui s'affaissent au cachot du désespoir" (*Cahier* 22), but the hybridity of connection that he draws with imagery of "hommes-hyènes:"

> Partir.
>
> Comme il y a des hommes-hyènes et des hommes-panthères, je serais un homme-juif
> un homme-cafre
> un homme-hindou-de-Calcutta
> un homme-de-Harlem-qui-ne-vote-pas
>
> l'homme-famine, l'homme-insulte, l'homme-torture
> on pouvait à n'importe quel moment le saisir le rouer de coups, le tuer – parfaitement le
tuer – sans avoir de compte à rendre à personne sans avoir d'excuses à présenter à personne
> un homme-juif
> un homme-pogrom
> un chiot
> un mendiot (20)

Even the specificity of the Martinican landscape Césaire evokes throughout the text was conceived when he was thousands of miles away, discovering the uncannily similar island of Martiniska in Yugoslavia.[8] When we consider the many connections this very geographically specific text has to outside influence, we understand the extent to which *Cahier* is also a deeply universal project. Emily Maguire posits that omitting the word *notebook* from the Spanish title,

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[8] See Césaire's detailed account of *Cahier*'s conception in Patrice Louis, *Conversation avec Aimé Césaire*, Arléa, 2007.

Retorno al país natal "emphasizes the power of the spatial shift, but diminishes the importance of the text—and language—as the tools for enacting this return" (130).

Lam's illustrations coupled with the act of Cabrera's translation (more than the text itself) thus become more critical actors alongside the text. The edition, limited as it was, opened the poem up to a larger Caribbean readership, but also a collective imagining of shared Caribbean experience. Alex Gil suggests, it "may have encouraged Césaire to envision his poem in other Caribbean contexts and languages" (50), but Césaire may not even need to be the focal point of this diffusion. *Retorno* in its own right was already doing the work of enlarging Césaire's vision of Negritude to other spaces. And while Cabrera performed a very literal translation of the text (Gil 49), Lam's images seem to help bridge the divide between the Francophone Caribbean experience and the Cuban one. If we are to see *Cahier* as actually performing a certain type of memory work, rather than a passive description, as "more a substantive *reconstitution* of and reflection upon experience than as a metaphor of that experience" (emphasis added, Irele xlix), then its format should also be considered on this operational level.

Few close readings of *Retorno* exist, and even fewer examinations of Lam's illustrations or how they function within the text. One exception is Richard Watts's analysis of Lam's drawings as one of the many paratexts influencing how *Cahier* was "packaged" and perceived. For Watts, Lam's images situate *Cahier* in the space of the Caribbean: "Both [Lam's drawings and Césaire's poetry] make use, in their respective media, of the vocabulary and syntax of the European avantgarde of the 1920s and 1930s at the same time that they inflect this vocabulary to make it reflect Caribbean realities and to present what they consider a nascent Afro-Caribbean consciousness" (101). Other critics make mention of the illustrations, but focus on either the

translation process or the translator herself.[9] Dominique Brebion references the hybridity of

Lam's illustrations for *Retorno* as a cornerstone of his own oeuvre as a whole. But she refrains

from making any direct connections between them and the text they accompany: "[Lam] répond

certes à l'esthétique surréaliste mais évoque aussi certaines croyances magico-religieuses afro-

cubaines. Cependant, les images créées par Lam ne se réfèrent à aucun terme du texte poétique.

Il n'y a aucune dépendance imitative des images par rapport au texte." While I agree that the

images resist any illustrative properties in a traditional sense, it is impossible to refuse them any

sort of referential qualities. While Lam's hybridized figures are not tied to one certain word, it is

hard not to see in them a reference to the "homme-hyène" of the aforementioned passage.

The final stanzas of *Cahier* act as an invocation of sorts to the wind, as the narrator gives

over his past being, mired in the weight of an enslaved and colonial past. The speaker, in his

"nouvelle croissance," implores the wind to embrace him, then switches to the more inclusive

and visually striking "NOUS" in all capital letters:

> embrasse-moi jusqu'au nous furieux
> embrasse, embrasse NOUS
> mais nous ayant également mordus
> jusqu'au sang de notre sang mordus !
> embrasse, ma pureté ne se lie qu'à ta pureté
> mais alors embrasse
> comme un champ de juste filaos
> le soir
> nos multicolores puretés
> et lie, lie-moi sans remords
> lie-moi de test vastes bras à l'argile lumineuse
> lie ma noire vibration au nombril même du monde
> lie, lie-moi, fraternité âpre
> puis, m'étranglant de ton lasso d'étoiles
> monte, Colombe
> monte

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[9]See Lourdes Arencibia Rodríguez, "Aimé Césaire y su traductora Lydia Cabrera: Dos formas de asumir lo antillano," *Anales del Caribe*, 2008, 28-39; and Emily A. Maguire, "Two Returns to the Native Land: Cabrera Translates Aimé Césaire," *Small Axe*, vol. 17, no. 3, Nov. 2013, pp. 125-37.

monte
                monte
                Je te suis, imprimée en mon ancestrale cornée blanche
                monte lécheur de ciel
                et le grand trou noir où je voulais me noyer l'autre lune
                c'est là que je veux pêcher maintenant la langue maléfique de la nuit en son immobile
                verrition ! (64-5)

Retorno ends with what we can read as Lam's interpretation of this dove, rising across the page

on the same wind that lifts the speaker. The horned figure floats on the page, with no background

to anchor it to a space, save the sole decorative star that recalls the "lasso of stars" in the text.

What appear first as wings transition to a crescent moon to complement the star and "l'autre

lune" of the text. It is in this description that we then find a resonance of the "vibration" the

speaker mentions. Lam's drawings are similar to those he completed for André Breton's *Fata

Morgana* in 1940 in their line-style, disarticulated figures, and enlarged appendages. One would

expect to see a congruence between the two works, but the *Retorno* series feels less tightly

defined than the intricate detail in *Fata Morgana*, perhaps more like sketches in order to

recapture the feel of "the notebook" that was quite literally lost in translation.

At the same time, the similarities in style cannot be overlooked as a nod to the time Lam

had just spent with the Surrealists in Marseille before leaving for the Americas. The images in

Retorno are not unlike certain collaborative drawings that Lam contributed to during his time at

the Villa Air-Bel in Marseille.[10] Fellow housemate, Benjamin Peret, wrote the introduction to

Retorno, an addition which Maguire calls a "gesture that served to connect Césaire's text—and,

by extension, the translation—to André Breton's surrealist project" (126). Part of the work of

this chapter is to unravel what all is contained in such "gestures" that continue to appear

alongside Césaire and Lam, in both their individual and collaborative work.

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[10]Dominique Brebion briefly questions if the style of Lam's illustrations for *Retorno* indeed harks back to the
surrealist game of *Cadavre exquis*.

Transatlantic Surrealism

The question of the role of Surrealism in the space of the Caribbean, and in Césaire and Lam's work in particular, appears in countless interviews, critical essays and speculations on both men's oeuvres. There seems to be a certain obsession around determining definitively if Césaire and Lam were in fact "Surrealists." Did they belong to the main movement or a specific Caribbean offshoot? Was Breton exoticizing what he saw in the Caribbean or were Caribbean poets exoticizing themselves, because they were experiencing what René Menil terms a "tragique dépossession" (20), rendering them unable to see outside of how they had been packaged by colonialism? J. Michael Dash reminds us that Surrealism was never a unified movement itself, so it is hard to make generalizing statements ("*Le Je*" 85). We can still point to questions of appropriation, race, colonization and politics central to Surrealism's global influence as one of the reasons this desire to determine its place within the Caribbean consistently resurfaces in critical literature. We should take a more careful look at who is saying what, when, and under what circumstances, to have a better understanding of why this question has been so prevalent in discussions surrounding Césaire and Lam.[11] At the heart of the debate rests the binary dilemma of terminology and categorization: framing it as an either/or question when it is a much messier entanglement.

A series of uncalculated, fortuitous events led to the first encounter between the two men. Both pursued an education in Europe, but might not have met if World War II had not forced them both to return to the Caribbean. Césaire had moved to Paris in 1931 to continue his education thanks to a government scholarship, but growing tensions at the start of World War II

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[11]Michael Richardson is one author who pays careful attention to these questions. His edited collection, *Refusal of the Shadow: Surrealism and the Caribbean*, focuses on presenting primary source texts that treat Surrealism in this space. He does, however, devote a good portion of his preface to contextualizing the debate around assimilation and appropriation.

compelled him to leave Europe for Martinique in 1939. Lam, who had also traveled to Europe to study in Madrid and then Paris, first fled to Marseilles in 1940 alongside hundreds of other artists and intellectuals who were looking for ways to leave the country. After a brief, but intensely productive period at the Villa Air-Bel with contemporaries André Breton, Benjamin Peret, René Ménil, André Masson and Max Ernst in Marseilles, Lam was able to secure passage to the Americas with around 350 others escaping Vichy France. Before arriving in Cuba, their boat made port in Martinique, where it was detained for a month by Nazi officials. Lam and many others were forced to remain most days in Lazaret camp, but Breton and his family were allowed to freely explore the island. It was during this layover that Breton came upon the recently established journal *Tropiques* and Césaire's seminal *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*.

During one of the few days Lam was allowed outside of the camp, Aimé and his wife Suzanne led him on an excursion into the Absalon forest with his companion Helena Holzer, Breton, Jacqueline Lamba, and Andre Masson. This encounter with the forests of Martinique would prove profoundly inspirational for all involved; several years later, Breton authored *Martinique, charmeuse des serpents* (1948) with nine drawings from Masson. Many critics speculate that Lam's famous painting *The Jungle* (1943), although created after his return to Cuba, was also first conceived thanks to this encounter with the depths of Martinican nature. Breton immortalized his "discovery" of Césaire in the preface that he wrote for the bilingual edition of Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*. This 1947 publication, which received much wider circulation than both the original 1939 edition in the journal *Volontés* and the 1942 Spanish translation discussed above, cemented the growing connections between Surrealism, Césaire and Lam.

One the one hand, it seems Breton and other Surrealists both in America and back in

France wanted to stake a claim to Césaire and Lam. Alex Gil cites Breton's insistence on

publishing a bilingual edition of *Cahier*, in addition to the substantial number of Césaire's poems

included in American surrealist publications, to suggest that the Surrealists were "intent on

making Césaire a household name" (51) in the New York intellectual circuit. A year before

Cahier's publication, another leading French surrealist critic, Maurice Nadeau, wrote an article

entitled "Aimé Césaire Surréaliste," in which he heralds a new wave of reinvigorated Surrealism

from across the Atlantic. He does so, however, with problematic imagery, portraying Césaire as

the "coal" desperately needed to restart the European surrealist locomotive, even alluding to

Caribbean writers as "singes agiles," who would come to set the blockhouse of Europe on fire

(294).

Lam's relationship to Surrealism follows a parallel development. As someone who spent

time with the surrealists in France, worked with Breton in Haiti, and whose work demonstrates

an alliance with surrealist aesthetics, there is still a tension around whether or not to *define* him

as a Surrealist. New York's Museum of Modern Art in the 1980s called Lam "the first Surrealist

to make primitive and ethnic sources central to his art" (Yau "Please" 59), suggesting he

followed in this Western tradition, somehow borrowing from his own Cuban-African-Chinese

ancestry.[12] Breton defined Lam's trajectory—the incorporation of his "merveilleux primitif" into

European art—in a similar vein, as "le chemin inverse" of Picasso (Gale 37).[13] In both cases, the

European influence stands as the reference point around which the description is made. Catherine

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[12]Yau highlights the lingering colonialist mindsets in this statement, as well as the MOMA's relegation of Lam's most famous work, *The Jungle*, to the hallway by the coatroom.

[13]Matthew Gale calls Breton's assessment of Lam through this comparative lens an "inevitable exoticism," emphasizing Breton's choice to assign to the term "marvelous" onto Lam's work as a sign of Breton's own fascination of Caribbean culture (37).

David, however, makes the case for a strong influence, while erasing some of the hierarchical assumptions of previous critics. She contends that the drawings Lam created with the Surrealists, during his stay in Marseilles at the start of the Second World War, in a way already epitomize his oeuvre as a whole: "Chez Lam, ces dessins peuplés de créatures fantastiques et familières […] *contiennent déjà* toute l'iconographie des grandes peintures et de l'œuvre gravée à venir" (emphasis added, 9). Césaire echoes the permanence of this influence, saying he never abandoned the techniques of Surrealism (Leiner *Le terreau primordial* 40).

On the other hand, both Lam and Césaire participated in this exchange with the Surrealists. One could argue that that could have in fact served their own interests by actively encouraging surrealist engagement in their works. In addition to illustrating Breton's *Fata Morgana* and participating in many collaborative drawings with Surrealists in Marseilles, Lam even left the naming of some of his titles up to Breton. Carrie Noland argues that Césaire used "the rhetorical tools of surrealism" to his advantage in order to convey his message the most effectively as possible to his contemporaries outside of the Caribbean (64). Roger Garaudy in a 1946 review of *Les armes miraculeuses*, sees Césaire as the strong plant that sprouted from the "manure" of Western Surrealism: "André Breton n'a apporté à la grande voix biblique de Césaire que des oripeaux de pacotille" (Garaudy). Edouard Glissant asserts that Césaire "is only a surrealist because he […] founded it in his Négritude, and not the other way around" ("Aimé" 100). We could start to read this reversal as a similar "claim," this time from the Antillean side.

Because of lingering colonialist cultural dynamics, implicit—sometimes invisible—frameworks of domination transfer onto critical interpretations of this transatlantic exchange. It is almost impossible not to see the problematic nature of how Breton addresses the Americas in the *Surrealist Manifesto*. He holds madness in high esteem and aligns himself with it by praising

36

"les fous" for their "honnêteté scrupuleuse, dont l'innocence n'a d'égale que la mienne" (17-18).

He then leaves us with a one-off connection between madness and the Americas as his example

of its genius: "Il fallut que Colomb partît avec des fous pour découvrir l'Amérique. Et voyez

comme cette folie a pris corps, et duré" (*Manifeste* 18). This assessment of Columbus repeats the

narrative that there was nothing there prior to his arrival, while adding that somehow, the *folie*

Breton appreciates so much was transferred from the explorers onto the space. In an essay

entitled "Poésie et connaissance," Césaire repeatedly cites the line directly after this one in the

Manifesto which reads: "Ce n'est pas la crainte de la folie qui nous forcera à laisser en berne le

drapeau de l'imagination…" ("Poésie" 169). The essay cites five of the most influential and

groundbreaking poets post-1850: Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Apollinaire, and finally,

Breton, but shows an especially high level of admiration for the latter. There's no treatment of

Breton's small reference to the colonization of the Americas, but can we not see something more

than mere coincidence in Césaire's choice of this quotation and its location in relation to the

other? Whether he wishes to connect his position in the Caribbean in some way to the *Manifesto*,

or reclaim the *folie* Breton values, it is clear that the implications of all the intertextual references

are too complex to be reduced to any binary framework. J. Michael Dash attempts to similarly

complicate Surrealism's encounter with the Caribbean by separating its ethnography from its

idealism. He rightly points to Edward Said's rejection of linear "traveling theories" to support

the unavoidable transformations that occur with the circulation of ideas, due to "its new position

in a new time and place" (qtd. in Dash "*Le Je*" 85). Perhaps it is this new position that explains

why Césaire and Lam both acknowledge the major impact of Surrealism on their work, but

refuse to be labeled with a term whose origins have altered once it encounters this new space.

The question of surrealist influence pervades interviews with Césaire, who time and again makes a point to praise Breton and Surrealism as major influences on his writing and own personal search for freedom, while refusing the categorization as a "Surrealist." He describes his relationship with Surrealism more as a coincidence of circumstance than a direct influence, saying he practiced Surrealism "without knowing it."[14] Meeting Breton in 1941 was more about finding a kindred spirit, than a mentor-student relationship. Césaire cites their parallel literary upbringing of Lautréamont and Rimbaud to place himself on equal footing with Breton and claims that when Breton came to Martinique, he wrongly assumed Césaire was a Surrealist (Boncenne 112). The Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet contains sixteen letters from Césaire to Breton (and two from his wife, Suzanne), although we can assume many more have gone missing based on the gaps in the conversation that spans the 1940s.[15] Césaire attributes Breton with helping him find the solution to the "contradiction fondamentale" of being "parti nègre – parti surréaliste" that others may have found problematic (Letter). He even added a short poem into the 1947 edition of *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (the same edition with Breton's preface), which had previously appeared in *Tropiques,* vol. 5 (1942) carrying a dedication to Breton. This section of *Cahier* is the most explicitly surrealist portion of the text, but the removal

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[14]"Tiens, je fais du surréalisme sans le savoir, parce que, en réalité, l'intérêt du surréalisme, c'est de foutre en l'air tout le conventionnel. Mais qu'est-ce que les Martiniquais ont de conventionnel? Alors je me suis dit: "Foutons en l'air tout ce conventionnel, ce français de salon, les imitations martiniquaises de la littérature française, tout ce côté placardé... Foutons tout ça en l'air! Fouille en toi! Allez fouille encore et encore! Et quand tu auras bien fouillé, tu trouveras quelque chose. Tu trouveras le Nègre fondamental!" (Louis, Patrice. *Conversation avec Aimé Césaire*. Paris: Arléa, 2007. p. 45 Print.)

[15]Pierre Laforgue addresses many of the letters in his analysis of the evolution of what became Césaire's collection *Les Armes miraculeuses,* as he outlines the various poems and correspondence that Césaire sent to Breton. Laforgue, Pierre. "La genèse des Armes miraculeuses d'Aimé Césaire (1941-1946)," *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 4.114 (2014) p. 859-895.

of the reference to Breton is yet another reminder of how sunken some of these nods of influence or "gestures" can become.

As a challenge to established boundaries and normalized "rational" thought, Surrealism left its mark on both Césaire and Lam, but the movement was bound to evolve as it migrated outside of Western Europe and encountered other artistic practices. Césaire understands the label of "Surrealism" as "une forme d'assimilation":

> C'est pour cela précisément que tout en me méfiant du qualificatif 'surréaliste' parce qu'il y a là un écueil, je n'ai jamais renoncé au surréalisme. Le surréalisme c'est le point de l'esprit ou l'Europe et l'Afrique peuvent se rejoindre. Le surréalisme, c'est une révolte contre l'esprit européen traditionnel et l'on peut presque dire que l'esprit non européen est naturellement surréaliste. (Boncenne 112)

With this telling sensitivity to terminology, Césaire reveals his awareness of the implications of "assimilation," a term which would reinforce Western hegemonic narratives of conquest and control. The contested meaning of "assimilation" was also central to the discourse surrounding Martinique's colonial status after the Second World War and its ultimate departmentalization in 1946. Originally, Césaire advocated for departmental status over independence as a way to achieve equality with the metropole. Martinicans quickly discovered that the true legal, political, and cultural equality that assimilation stood for was unattainable. This question of "assimilation" marks an intersection between Césaire's political and poetic lives. On the poetic front, instead of the unidirectional coercion that this assimilationist framework came to imply, Césaire chooses to view Surrealism as an encounter on a philosophical and psychological level.

Lam, in addition to considering himself a "Trojan horse" that would infiltrate the dreams of the colonizers, has also reflected carefully on the label of Surrealism: "Surrealism gave me an opening, but I haven't painted in a surrealist manner. Rather, I keep providing a solution to Surrealism. Miró and I renewed Surrealism" (Mosquera 6). He contests the assumption that

39

European Surrealists influenced Caribbean artists, when the reality proves to be much more complex.

When Edouard Glissant referred to Césaire's oeuvre as a "complicity between modern Western poetics […] and Black poetics" ("Aimé" 100), he was specifically referencing Césaire's friendships with the Surrealists André Breton and Paul Éluard, in relation to those he held with Léopold Sédar Senghor and Lam. Glissant brings together a cacophony of "inspirations" from these two seemingly oppositional forces: "the power of rhythm, the marvelous, the lack of restraint, humor, the original fusion and cosmic foundation of the word, along with the procedures of accumulation, assonance, vertigo, etc." which he sees in Césaire's work "encounter each other without blending into each other" (100). Even though his initial distinction between Western poetics and Black poetics may seem at first to be creating a larger dichotomy than the reality of the relationships at hand, the mélange of inspirations that follow speak to the complexity of these exchanges, which—as his "etc." hints—continue to be explored.

Annonciation

Césaire and Lam's 1982 collaboration *Annonciation* retains the traces of Surrealism that marked both men, but with a focus shifted to the lived experience of the Caribbean that is an undeniably essential component to both artist and poet. The series, comprised of ten poems and seven colored etchings, questions the nature of signs and their referents by playing with the way in which the poetry fuses with and repels from the artwork. It challenges the parameters of what even constitutes a collaboration, as it was never fully realized as a bound, printed, and circulated book. But, like the suggestive pairing enacted by Lacarrière's book at the beginning of this chapter, the collaboration exists in museum spaces whose catalogues bring it into the more traditional printed book form. I argue that in examining the way in which this work functions on

the page, in the museum space, and within the space of our own interpretive process, we can understand it—and by extension, many collaboratively authored projects in the Francophone Caribbean—as a practice of what Édouard Glissant terms Relational thinking. Reading collaborative works, such as this one, as intersecting, fluctuating processes of becoming, rather than fixed entities, offers a non-reductive method to reading the encounter of text and image in the context of the Caribbean: a space of encounters par excellence. Through Edouard Glissant's framework of Relation and *tremblement*, we are able to read both text and image as participating in an archipelagic way of thinking, whereby an encounter between two entities does not inwardly destroy parts of either, but serves to outwardly destabilize diametrically opposed classifications.

I will explore several levels of encounters on which we see this process unfold. I begin with a discussion of the spatial questions raised by this particular work, which never saw full, isolated publication, but appeared in conflicting, often truncated forms in print and in exhibitions. I then analyze the levels of dialogue present in the collaboration, including the various languages of interpretation we as readers/viewers bring to it. This level of encounter, also functions in a relational, creolizing process, as the exchange of European Surrealism and Afro-Caribbean histories creates something new that can no longer be called Surrealism proper, nor fully escape the entangled histories created by colonialism and modernity's cross-cultural exchanges. Reading *Annonciation* as a new type of exquisite corpse: an assemblage of singular parts that function both separately and as a singular whole, gives us a way to talk about collaborative authorship, the frontier between artistic and literary fields, in a unified, comprehensive way. Lastly, I will examine how the initial challenges of reading this particular work actually position it as a prime example of Relation and elicit a higher level of involvement from outsiders (readers, editors, curators, etc.).

Printed Page to Museum Wall: Identifying the True Location of Encounter

Even if Lam and Césaire did not have much face-to-face interaction after their brief, but highly influential, encounter in Martinique in 1941, they remained present in each other's lives for the next forty-odd years.[16] It was not until 1981 that Lam asked Césaire to complement a series of seven aquatint etchings that he had produced in 1969 with his poetry (Maximin 8). Césaire responded with ten poems and Lam's longtime colleague, Giorgio Upiglio of Grafica Uno in Milan edited and oversaw the printmaking in 1982. Unfortunately, Lam's death in that same year halted publication and the series, *Annonciation*, was never released in book format.[17] Césaire's poems were included at the end of his 1982 collection, *Moi, Laminaire…* without the images; however, critics have pegged the choice of title as a final remembrance of Lam's impact on Césaire's life.[18]

If the artist's book was never completed and released as such, we are left with many unanswered questions that initially seem to impede any attempt to examine the project critically. There is no definitive edition on which to base future representations of this collaboration. We do not know how the images would be juxtaposed with the text, nor what other decisions about font or spacing would have been made. This uncertainty results in a certain level of flexibility that gets transferred onto a third party (publisher, editor, even reader) to participate in the

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[16]Correspondence between André Breton and Césaire in the Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet attests to the continued conversations between Lam and Césaire.

[17]The SDO Wifredo Lam archives in Paris hold the only printings of the book cover, title page, list of poems and a colophon with thumbnails of the seven original etchings.

[18]Another subtle nod to their connection; "une laminaire" is a type of seaweed that protects sea life from the harsh sea current, which some critics have seen as an exemplary image of the bond between the two men ("Dossier pédagogique" 11).

collaborative process. In a similar fashion to *Corps Perdu*, the collaboration between Césaire and

Picasso, sometimes Césaire's text for *Annonciation* is presented without any mention of Lam's

etchings. The title of each of Lam's etchings corresponds to the title of one of the poems, so

unlike *Corps Perdu* they are never misaligned. However, the order in which they are presented

varies from the layout determined by the unfinished book. The catalogue to the 2011 exhibit,

"Césaire and Lam: insolites bâtisseurs," positions an etching alongside nine of the ten poems in

the *Annonciation* series. Later that year, a critical companion to Césaire's *Moi, Laminaire…*

stands as the first published book unaffiliated with a museum to include the *Annonciation* poems

with black and white reproductions of Lam's aquatints. Unlike the exhibit, it presents the original

portfolio: ten poems, only *seven* of which were accompanied by aquatints (Ba 225). Despite any

explicit explanation from the exhibition catalogue's authors, the two "additional" etchings,

"Wifredo Lam" and "genèse pour Wifredo," clearly were not part of the original 1982

collaboration, even though they may have been part of the 1969 series that Lam produced, as

they strongly resemble the other etchings in subject and composition.[19] If we remove these two,

the poems without any corresponding image are those that figure Lam directly: "Wifredo Lam,"

"genèse pour Wifredo" and "Conversation avec Mantonica Wilson."[20] Already we can see how

the collaboration transforms—and how the viewer experiences it—depending on the space it

inhabits. Even though Ba's critical commentary reproduces most accurately the original 1982

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[19]In Maximin's catalogue these two etchings are attributed to a different publisher (Éditions du Centenaire) and the date of the printing and edition is 2000, as opposed to 1982 for the other aquatints. The two later additions were not present in the unfinished 1982 art book. They also differ slightly in size from the other seven and, while listed as Lam's etchings, are not included in the series of plates numbering I-VII in the press release for the Grand Palais exhibit, "Césaire, Lam, Picasso: 'nous nous sommes trouvés.'"

[20]Mantonica Wilson, Lam's godmother, had a profound impact on Lam's imagination, as well as his knowledge and encounter with Santeria. "L'enfant reçut de sa marraine une empreinte définitive qui détermina l'épaisseur esthétique de son œuvre, peuplée de visions magiques, ténébreuses, à la croisée du monde conscient et de l'hallucination" (Ba 223). His aquatints in *Annonciation* exemplify this contact with the magical and hallucinatory.

portfolio, while also allowing for a wider distribution of the complete collaboration, printing

costs and size constraints reduced the quality and grandeur of the original images. While we do

get the images, they are separated from the poetry by the authors' commentary; all these factors

cannot but influence our reading of their relation to the text.

Our only true window into this collaboration, therefore, seems to come in the form of the

museum exhibition; it is in this space where we get to experience what would most closely

resemble the original work in size and scale. To my knowledge, there have been three

exhibitions that include the *Annonciation* series: "Wifredo Lam et Mahi Binebine en hommage à

Aimé Césaire" at the Galerie Delacroix in Morocco (2009); "Aimé Césaire, Lam, Picasso 'Nous

nous sommes trouvés'" at the Grand Palais in Paris (2011) and the Fondation Clément in

Martinique (2013); and a retrospective of Lam's oeuvre at the Centre Pompidou in Paris (2015),

the Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid (2016) and London's Tate Modern (2016). In

fact, one of the goals of the 2011 exhibit in Paris was to finally offer a resolution to the

unfinished collaboration, as the Grand Palais's website explains: "one of the primary aims of this

exhibition is to bring these powerful engravings in colour together with the ten poems." It seems

fitting, on several levels, that this particular collaboration extends itself more fully into the

museum space, instead of a bound book. Césaire was constantly rewriting his poetry; cutting,

adding and reworking lines, his was a poetics of movement that showed the process to be as

important as whatever you could call the "final product."[21] The printmaking process also

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[21]Césaire's best known and longest poem, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, went through some of the most dramatic revisions, to the extent that scholars feel it necessary to delineate three distinct versions (1939, 1947 and 1956). Alex Gil has worked extensively on these evolutions: see his "Bridging the Middle Passage: The Textual (R)evolution of Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*." *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, March 2011, pp. 40-56.

involves a delicate trial and error process. Once the final versions are printed, they can still be

positioned in the museum space differently and the text can surround them in a number of ways.

The Lam retrospective exhibit in London mirrors the subtle distinctions that the Maximin

catalogue suggests; mainly the separation of the two etchings, "Wifredo Lam" and "genèse pour

Wifredo," from the other seven, which can be found clustered on an opposing wall. However, the

Annonciation series here shockingly omits all of Césaire's corresponding poetry. The only

mention of them comes in the section label of the room, which reads:

> Increasingly, [Lam] concentrated on experimenting with different print techniques in
> collaboration with the Italian master printmaker, Giorgio Upiglio in Milan. In 1969, Lam
> created the Annunciation series in Upiglio's workshop, although it was notdo until 1982
> that, in declining health, he called upon his old friend Aimé Césaire to dedicate a poem to
> each Annunciation print. Both Lam's imagery and Césaire poetry are redolent with
> themes of spirituality and rebirth.

The small room next to this one is solely dedicated to the collaboration Lam produced with

Ghérasim Luca, entitled *Apostroph'Apocalypse*, with display cases holding the pages of the book

laid flat. One could argue the stark difference between the way these two collaborations are

shown reflects the fact that *Annonciation* was never a printed and circulated book on its own.

However, the exhibit highlights another one of Lam's published collaborations with the artist

René Char (*Contre une maison sèche*, 1976), displaying again only the etchings, no

accompanying text. The object label simply reads that the book "expresses hope in the face of

the barbarism of war and speaks of the consolations of art."

One can only speculate the reasons for separating text from image, as the poems were in

fact Césaire's response to viewing Lam's prints. For the text-only printings, perhaps it was a

financially driven decision in order to facilitate the circulation of the poems to a wider audience.

For the image-only showings, there may have been other copyright considerations. The

consequences of the split publication are nevertheless still worth examining. The moments when

the text calls to an interlocutor—"ton dernier défi" in "Que l'on présente son cœur au soleil" or the repetitive call of "eh" in "Connaître, dit-il"—address an absence when the poems are not alongside the images, but underscores the dialogue between the two when read together.

Separating text from image, I propose, strips away the larger questioning of divisions that this work poses. The reader/viewer's eye oscillating between both forms begins to visualize the poetry and read into the text in ways that we might not otherwise do when only looking at one form at a time. The oral component of poetry allows us to perhaps hear a part of the visual, in a constructed form of artificial synesthesia (a condition in which the brain assigns certain tastes to language, or colors to numbers and letters). In "Rabordaille," the rhythmic repetition of "en ce temps" and "un homme" in the text resonates through the at once chaotic, but evenly distributed figures. The crosspollination of genres serves to further remind the reader/viewer the extent to which each part is merely a system of signs to which each interpreter can assign a different signified. John Yau analyzes the evolution of Lam's painting, moving away from a situational background to a more abstract "atmospheric ground," in addition to his emphasis of the non-human in his figures, in order to create what Yau calls "pure signs" that emphasize the "self-sufficiency of this language" ("From" 64). As opposed to pairing text with the photographic image, which captures the real,[22] the aquatint and the poem are both representations using various tools for conveying meaning to the reader/viewer.

There are many actors involved in creating this meaning. The repositioning of text and image, both in the museum space and on the printed page, as well as the unique connections drawn by the individual reader/viewer contribute to the collaborative process started by Césaire

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[22]Roland Barthes distinguishes the unique nature of photography from that of other "imitations" like painting, in that "dans la Photographie, je ne puis nier que la chose a été là" (*La Chambre claire*, 120). Photography has as its essence, the "ça-a-été".

and Lam. We should not forget the problematic status of certain museum practices in our consideration of the exhibit, one to which Lam was keenly attuned. During a trip to France in 1946, he describes a Fanonian moment in which he feels objectified like a museum piece: "Ici je me sens postiche, comme un être exotique (marqué si l'on veut) comme une statue nègre ou océanienne du Pacifique ou peu importe d'où, mais dont l'être transplanté devient ici un produit stérile, un objet bizarre pour musée" (qtd. in David, 38).

Critical responses to Césaire and Lam's encounters, whether in printed form or not, are quite unique and more creative in nature. In addition to including several of Lam's drawings with no explicit explanation as to why, Lacarrière also writes a poem to Césaire as a way of expressing how Césaire's poetic work has influenced him. In the exhibit catalogue to the 2011 Paris exhibit, instead of writing a more academic critical assessment or analysis of Césaire and Lam's collaborations, Martinican author Daniel Maximin proposes an invented dialogue he has created, not between Césaire and Lam, but between their most well-known works, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* and *La Jungle*. These more creative expressions speak to a larger uncertainty about how to approach such poetic, visual works with a prose that will not undermine their poetic and affective impact: an effort to do them justice. At the same time, these responses represent a certain level of freedom that the works not only allow, but encourage through their dialogic nature.

Languages of Reading

John Yao refers to Lam's imagery as a "language" (64), but is it even possible to speak about a dialogue between the two different "languages"? Gilles Plazy will say that poetry "speaks," while painting "demonstrates": "s'il y a dialogue d'homme entre le poète et le peintre, il ne saurait y en avoir entre la poésie et la peinture (ou le dessin et la gravure) qui ne parlant pas

la même langue sont irréductibles l'une à l'autre" (55). The terminology surrounding this question serves as a point of entry to a simultaneous consideration of both text and image. *Annonciation* forces us to critically examine how we tend to talk about art and poetry more broadly. There is some interesting slippage that occurs between artistic versus literary critiques; we can talk about visual "texts" or how to "read" an image in the same way we can discuss a writer's "imagery" or how he or she sets the "scene." The vocabulary of critical analysis seems to draw these two forms of expression together. Comparing the varying structure of the forms themselves, we can understand artistic creation on a theoretical scale with "art" on one pole and "literature" on the other. Font choice (including handwritten text styles) and placement on the page pulls poetry towards the art realm, while artists can choose to have text in their work, have the text as the art itself, or create a narrative within the work without the use of the written word. Think of concrete poetry, Robert Indiana's *LOVE*, "silent" comic strips, or stained-glass representations of biblical verse.

Lam's work is frequently described in a literary register. Jacques Leenhardt describes Lam's universal imagery as "the vocabulary with which [he] sets out to construct his paintings, much in the same way a poet gives order to his words" (10). Dominique Diard speaks of the gaze of Césaire's writing in *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* which "par l'ekphrasis, envahit l'oeil du lecteur et entend le convaincre sans recours" (82). Lam himself has described his painting in *The Jungle* as using "poetry to show the reality of acceptance and protest" (Linsley 532). Both poet and artist have shown the porous nature of their work; their susceptibility to other forms of representation has positioned their collaborative work to oscillate between genres.

In a dialogical context, seeing the text as a response to the original artwork opens up the possibility of examining *Annonciation* as a variation on an exquisite corpse.[23] The *Cadavre exquis* was a collaborative Surrealist game in which one person starts a drawing that another person finishes. Traditionally, the first person folds the paper, leaving only two guiding marks, so that the next person will know where to connect his or her drawing, but is prohibited from seeing what the first person drew. Even though Césaire could see the entirety of Lam's etchings while he was writing, we as third party "contributors/readers" add our own guiding marks to connect the two mediums together. Césaire's lines extend various points off of Lam's etchings. In "Connaître, dit-il," Césaire cites parts of the figures that compose Lam's work. We can identify influences for "le bec de l'oiseau," "l'orteil qui insiste" or "la croupe de la femme" within Lam's print, but the text also diverges and expands in its own direction. Using a term primarily applied to animals (*la croupe*) for a woman highlights in linguistic form the exaggerated scale of the female figure on the right, as well as Lam's frequent overlapping and intersecting of human and animal. In "que l'on présente son cœur au soleil," the warmer, lighter background is reflected not only in the title, but also in the text's "solaire" and "aube," while references to creation and sexuality through "oeuf," "des germes" and "le sexe frais" draw our attention to the egg-like oval shapes and number of female forms in this etching as opposed to others in the series. The text works first through a certain power of suggestion to allow us to connect both artistic and literary forms, only to search then for the ways in which they diverge from each other.

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[23]Lowery S. Sims refers to the organic way surrealist-inspired elements in Lam's paintings from the 60s and 70s unfold on the canvas as "cadavres exquis." See his "Wifredo Lam: Les années soixante et soixante-dix," *Repères: Cahiers d'art contemporain*, vol. 33, 1986, p.13.

This suggestive power highlights correlations between text and image that in a sense deconstructs each separate work, but only in order to fuse the two together into one inseparable work. "Façon langagière" plays with the way in which the reader/viewer tries to decipher codes. We may first search to link up the text and image, locating the starting points of the exquisite corpse. The diamond form, common to Lam's imagery, in the upper left quadrant of the aquatint is not what our eye is drawn to first, but seems to pop once we connect it to the line "le losange veille les yeux fermés." Our eye then searches the depths of the artwork for another "sign" and we find, hidden in the lower right quadrant, a repetition of the diamond, this time on the head of a female horned figure. There are no eyes—or are they closed, as the poem seems to signal? We may also connect the horned, mythical creatures in Lam's work to Césaire's image of "fauves," who have been stripped of sacred territory. The references to the sacred and to the hieroglyphic suggest a possible spiritual iconic imagery present in the aquatint. The diamond could be a permutation of the symbol associated with the Abakuá secret society (Ba 230),[24] while the dismembered head repeated three times at different angles across the plate is a common representation of the Santeria god, Ellegua (Linsley 539).

The text of "Façon langagière" discusses this process of deciphering with its references to "clé," "hiéroglyphes," and "l'infinie combinatoire." With each step in our at once destructive and connective reading, we feel closer to "cracking the code"; it is "à portée de toute main" to take another line from the poem. However, within what system are we working and how shall we know if we have succeeded? Césaire's poem resists the traditional structural "code" of language;

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[24]See Rafael A. Núñez Cedeño, "The Abakuá Secret Society in Cuba: Language and Culture." *Hispania*, vol. 7, no. 1, Mar 1988, pp. 148-54. An all-male secret society in Cuba composed of enslaved men from diverse linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, the *abakuá*'s roots can be traced to the Ekpe Secret Society in Nigeria (149). Cedeño examines the internal hybridity and opacity of the community as a reflection of this transatlantic transposition. Ba notes that Lam witnessed some Abakuá initiation ceremonies, thanks to friend Alejo Carpentier (232).

the syntax is disjointed and plays with how parts of speech function. Lam's etching overflows ("déborde," if we take another clue from the poem) with forms, intersecting and overlapping to create multiple ways to interpret each form or sign. Philippe Soupault writes that Lam's drawings (some of which would become etchings for *Annonciation*) resist any attempt to attach one single signified to a signifier: "Comme des mots qui peuplent les rêves, les dessins de Lam échappent au plus attentif de ceux qui veulent en fixer les significations" (115). The work resists an oversimplified connect-the-dots method of analysis, while still inviting the process of interpretation. It encourages us to consider the necessary and important role of the reader/viewer to the fusion of the two pieces. If poem and etching are in dialogue, a third party is needed to hear and interpret the conversation, to save it from going unresolved, mute.[25] It is this *process* of interpretation, not any definitive conclusion, that makes the back-and-forth dialogue function. Understanding each etching and its corresponding text as a sort of exquisite corpse also fuses the two components together, so that it would be inadequate to view either piece on its own.

If we look at the basic elements of analysis for each style of representation, we can make some interesting overlaps to help conceive of a totalizing "reading" of *Annonciation*. Mood can be created by the composition of the print, the use of color and the placement of the figures; in the poetry, this translates to diction and composition of the lines. Rhythm influences the tone on both sides, as rhyme, repetition or gesture (movement or stasis) in the composition. While the palette of language is more restrictive than what an artist can create, the poetic form allows for a certain flexibility through reordering syntax and a placement on the page, whereas traditional prose is more regulated. Some of Césaire's text seems to mirror directional movement in Lam's etchings. The diagonal movement of the repeating "ici" follows the strongest diagonal line from

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[25]Perhaps this third-party participation is what spurred Daniel Maximin to create his own dialogue between Césaire's *Cahier* and Lam's *Jungle* (*Césaire & Lam* 13-36).

top left to center in Lam's image. The odd structuring of "façon langagière" with the second line "hiéroglyphes" pushed out to the far right emphasizes the long arm pushing away a detached head in the corresponding print. Lam's "passages" contains the most horizontal and diagonal movement of all the prints in the series and its accompanying poem mimics this stretching:

> (la nécessité de la spéciation
>
> n'étant acceptée que dans la mesure
>
> où elle légitime les plus audacieuses transgressions)

passer dit-il

> et que dure chaque meurtrissure

passer

> mais ne pas dépasser les mémoires vivantes

passer

> (penser est trop rapide)

While the text can imitate the movement of the etching, it has a much more rigidly constrained core. Text seems to have more limitations in this way than the created image because of its necessary attachment to alphabet—a code in its own right. Syntax can be altered, text can be manipulated, but not to the point that the individual letters of this code become no longer recognizable. The poet can play with meaning by combining parts of the code in endless possibilities, but the system itself that allows us to interpret that meaning must remain intact in its most basic sense. Once the text is too far removed from the system of language, it becomes image. The image is free from this imposed code. It can create its own code of signs, relative (or not) to other images or codified systems.

Visually Representing Relation

Édouard Glissant recognized the many kinetic possibilities in fine art, as its form appears to resonate at a closer frequency than prose to his theories on Relation and the Tout-monde. Glissant's many published pieces of art criticism testify to his long-term fascination with painting and sculpture; however, his theories on art are just now coming under more careful consideration by scholars.[26] In his 2005 experimental essay *La Cohée du Lamentin*, Glissant discusses art, theater and poetry in more depth, in a search both for how they can work as expressions of his Archipelagic thought and for how his prose can adequately represent them as such. Renée Lucien terms the "philo-poétic" of *Cohée* a reinvented ekphrasis in and of itself (156). In a section dedicated to Wifredo Lam, Glissant describes the community of Caribbean thinkers, poets and artists alike, and their recreation of space through artistic expression. The painter, here Lam, has a unique role to play:

> Ce que le peintre a amassé d'éléments, de formes, de germinations souveraines, dans son île et dans sa mémoire, il les distribue en mouvements qui bientôt dirigeront l'enluminure et la fiesta, la rencontre avec l'autre. Les données du réel cubain, les formes réhabilitées de l'univers négro-africain, les figures obtenues à partir de tant de rencontres, s'élancent dans toutes les directions et s'achèvent, c'est-à-dire se réalisent, dans l'inattendu de l'énorme Relation mondiale. (190)

If Relation is a force that "relie, relaie, relate" (37), then not only Lam's standalone work, but his collaboration with Césaire should also (and especially) exemplify this kind of thinking. It is these hardline systems of thought Glissant calls "pensées de système et des systèmes de pensée" that *Annonciation* strives to destabilize through the simultaneous readings of the viewer, oscillating from the text to the image, relating the two, but never subordinating one to the other. I contend that the participation of the reader is an essential part in creating this destabilizing

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[26]See J. Michael Dash, "Ni réel ni rêvé : Édouard Glissant – poétique, peinture, paysage," pp.33-40. Also Lucien, "Regards d'Edouard Glissant," pp. 155-162.

movement of *Tremblement,* as she becomes a part of the larger collaborative process. *Annonciation* establishes a dialogue into which we as readers/viewers are compelled to create the links between text and image.

If, as I affirmed previously, the primary connecting force between Césaire, Lam and Surrealism is the idea of revolt against a traditional European mindset, that revolt connotes a certain destructive force, a certain kinetic energy.[27] This drive towards destruction is not solely for destruction's sake, but in order to build something new. The work itself opens up a space for new and unexpected connections to be made. Gerardo Mosquera depicts Lam's representation as anti-taxonomic: "everything is connected and everything participates, one within the other, thus radically fracturing the relationship created by the Western world between les mots et les choses"[28] (90). Gregson Davis has highlighted Césaire's affection for Mallarmé and the arbitrary connection between signifier and signified, but argues that both Césaire and Mallarmé "do more than assert the principle of the 'empty' signifier (to use the term of Roland Barthes); they want to restore the plenitude to the signifier by creating a new language in which the bond between word and thing would once again be 'natural'" (Davis *Non-Vicious* 14). For all the vocabulary of encounter and connection that permeates conversations surrounding author and artist individually, it is surprising that almost no scholarship speaks to the importance of their collaborative works, which exemplify such an encounter.

Césaire himself used a rather Glissantian vocabulary in a 1987 speech he gave in Miami at the "Première conférence hémisphérique des peuples noirs de la diaspora." In the decades

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[27]Césaire's apocalyptic imagery is well-documented; for example, in *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*: "Qu'y puis-je?/ Il faut bien commencer./ Commencer quoi?/ La seule chose au monde qu'il vaille la peine de commencer :/ La Fin du monde parbleu" (32).

[28]Mosquera's nod to Michel Foucault's *Les mots et les choses* (1966), which argues that the study of language, and more specifically the relationship between a sign and its referent, has been a major defining characteristic of Western philosophy in the 20th century.

following the conception of Négritude, he continued to push back against the critiques that saw it

as an essentializing movement, chained to its time, or otherwise stagnant.

> Si la Négritude n'a pas été une impasse, c'est qu'elle menait autre part. Où nous menait-elle ? Elle nous menait à nous-mêmes. Et de fait, après une longue frustration, c'était la saisie par nous-mêmes, de notre passé et, à travers la poésie, à travers l'imaginaire, à travers le roman, à travers les œuvres d'art, la fulguration intermittente de notre possible devenir. *Tremblement* des concepts, séisme culturel, toutes les métaphores de l'isolement sont ici possible. […] le tout se traduisant non pas par un passéisme archaïsant, mais par une réactivation du passé en vue de son propre dépassement. (emphasis added, qtd. in Thébia-Melsan 31)

Aside from the nod to Glissant's poetics, I find it especially poignant that the passageway to

reach this Tout-monde-style, possible future comes by way of literature, art and the imagination.

I see *Annonciation* and the illustrated *Retorno al pais natal* as text-images gateways to access

this type of imaginary. Perhaps what Gary Wilder has termed Césaire's "untimely vision," in

relation to his forward-thinking decision to advocate for Martinique's departmentalization over

its independence, can also be applied to the imaginative space created within these collaborative

works.

Spheres and Spaces of Influence

As I have focused on the many submarine connections that surround this lesser-studied

relationship between Lam and Césaire, it seems only appropriate to conclude with two final

quotations about influence. Romuald Fonkoua's biography of Césaire reflects on Lam's

influence on Césaire with reference to the Surrealists as well: "Ce que la peinture de Lam révèle

en définitive à Césaire et qu'éclaire la pensée des surréalistes (Breton, Péret), c'est le gout, la

force et l'étendue du merveilleux tropical."[29] This telluric imagery is also present in Césaire's

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[29]Quoted in Yolaine Parisot, "Esquisses martiniquaises" du réel merveilleux caribéen : *Ferrements (autour de "statue de lafcadio Hearn" et "Wifredo lam" dans Moi, laminaire ...*" *Présence Africaine*, vol. 189, 2014, p. 130.

own assessment of Lam: "Wifredo Lam ne regarde pas. Il sent. Il sent le long de son corps maigre et de ses branches vibrantes passer riche de défis, la grande sève tropicale."[30] Césaire must have thought of Lam as a poet in some way, because he used the same hybrid imagery of the corporeal-arboreal in "Poésie et connaissance" when he makes the distinction between "man" and "poet": "l'homme […] n'est point un arbre. Ses bras imitent des branches, mais ce sont des branches flétries, qui, d'avoir méconnu leur fonction qui est d'étreindre la vie, sont retombées le long du tronc desséchées l'homme ne fleurit point" (163). It is only the poet who can bring together the "floraison humaine" and "l'universelle floraison." The sensorial references to taste and feeling pull us away from the text and image associated to each man's work towards something larger than the visual alone can capture; at the same time their central telluric imagery also assures us that it will still be something expressly tied to the space of the Caribbean.

Glissant calls Lam a "passeur non réconcilié, entre plusieurs mondes, entre l'ancien et le nouveau, vers 'une participation de tous à la beauté multipliée, totale, inattendue'" (qtd. in David, 12). As the "Trojan horse," Lam's movement between worlds exemplifies Glissant's conception of *Tremblement*. Chapter two will explore what is at stake in being a "passeur" in response to a linear construction of History in Patrick Chamoiseau's graphic novels.

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[30]In "Lam et les Antilles," reprinted in *Wifredo Lam, XXème siècle*.

CHAPTER 2: PASSEURS, MAJORS, ET HÉROS: NAVIGATING MARTINIQUE'S (NON)HISTORY THROUGH BANDE DESSINEE

L'une des conséquences les plus terrifiantes de la colonisation sera bien cette conception univoque de l'Histoire, et donc du pouvoir, que l'Occident a imposée aux peuples.

- Édouard Glissant, *Le Discours antillais*

To control the narrative of History is to allocate and maintain power. While neither the first nor the last to examine this dynamic, Édouard Glissant devotes many sections of the comprehensive *Discours antillais* (1981) to exploring the lasting legacies of colonialism in Martinique and the Antilles, specifically the ways in which it has come to structure not only the outside world, but the mental imaginaries of colonized and colonizer alike. For Glissant, Europe has made a unique discipline out of History (with a capital H), one that signals linearity, unity and implicit hierarchies. The Antillean past, compiled from an amalgam of histories and the violence of slavery that erased ancestral lineages, has gaps and fractures; it does not stem from one focal point or time. In a section entitled "La querelle avec l'Histoire," Glissant addresses what he deems an unnecessary division between the fields of literature and history. He accords the writer a large role to play in recuperating a Relational historical memory, as opposed to a univocal, (falsely) objective one: "l'écrivain antillais doit 'fouiller' cette mémoire, à partir de traces parfois latentes qu'il a repérées dans le réel. […] Parce que le temps antillais fut stabilisé dans le néant d'une non-histoire imposée, l'écrivain doit contribuer à rétablir sa chronologie tourmentée" (228). This non-history challenges the linearity of an assumed chronological timeline because so much of the past remains concealed within the present. A Relational history

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that places creative aesthetics alongside more factual accounts resembles the cohabitation of poetics and history that Dipesh Chakrabarty describes in *Provincializing Europe*. He calls for an acknowledgement and disruption of the "metanarrative of progress" (88) that has become synonymous with historicism. When these connotations behind historicism do not align with subaltern experiences, the subaltern is branded as outside progress or "behind the times." For Chakrabarty, as for Glissant, placing poetics alongside historiography introduces an "irreducible heterogeneity" (178) that more closely represents the subaltern lived experience. The goal is not to smooth out a subaltern past to make it resemble a Western trajectory. As Valérie Loichot insists, 'non-histoire' "n'est pas la réfutation de l'histoire mais plutôt une pratique épistémologique qui associerait méthodes historique et imaginaires d'investigation dans la confrontation à l'inconnu du 'gouffre'" (561). In its disjuncture and constant evolutions, the Antillean non-history resists being fully incorporated as one conclusive unit into the collective consciousness. A Glissantian Relational history would resist being understood as one, uniform entity, bringing factual accounts and literary imaginaries to work side by side.

Reaffirming his contemporary, Derek Walcott's assessment that history is "irrelevant" in the Caribbean, "not because it is not being created, or because it was sordid, but because it has never mattered, what has mattered is the *loss* of history" (emphasis added, 6). Glissant points to the lack of official recognition of the 1802 explosion at Matouba in Guadeloupe as evidence of the negative consequences of this non-history. Vowing never again to return to a system of slavery, rebellion leader Louis Delgrès and several hundred allies set explosives in their own camp, killing themselves and the first wave of approaching French soldiers. An ostensibly similar story of conflict, power struggle and shifting alliances, the fate of Guadeloupe (and Martinique) would play out differently than that of Saint-Domingue's independence in 1804.

This last-resort maneuver at Matouba effectively ended the resistance and French troops reclaimed the island for the Hexagon until it became an overseas department in 1946. A small commemorative plaque was installed at the site in 1948, but in *Le Discours antillais*, Glissant draws attention to almost a century and a half of official silence following this act, calling it Delgrès's "second defeat" (224). The deficit in the historical memorialization perhaps inspired Aimé Césaire to turn his political efforts to the literary realm. His 1959 poem, "Mémorial de Louis Delgrès" presents a transformation from Icarus to demiurge. Despite being failed by his hubris—his attempts to achieve the impossible, the unthinkable—Icarus is nevertheless immortalized in our collective canon of mythic figures. The rhetoric Césaire uses in regards to Delgrès mirrors this canonization, pronouncing his name to the world and placing it on a metaphorical pedestal: "Louis Delgrès je te nomme / et soulevant hors silence le socle de ce nom."[1] Although Glissant doesn't specifically reference Césaire's literary turn, it seems to follow his call for literature to step up where a traditional historicist approach to recounting has either failed or is entirely insufficient.

What are the implications for a national consciousness of mythologizing the leader of a failed revolution? What kind of demiurge does Delgrès's decision for mass suicide make him? These questions are often overshadowed by a general understanding of Delgrès as a martyr who would rather face death than slavery. Martinican author Patrick Chamoiseau categorizes Delgrès as an Antillean *version* of a Western hero:

> […] nous avons été tentés par le héros occidental, vertical, un peu à la Robin des Bois. C'est pourquoi dans la littérature antillaise, on a beaucoup de figures du nègre marron, Toussaint Louverture, Delgrès, Dessalines. Nous sommes absolument fascinés, nous cherchons quel serait pour nous l'équivalent du héros occidental, comme tous les grands rebelles qu'on a connus dans l'historiographie occidentale.[2] (Plumecocq 134-5)

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[1] For a close reading and translation of the poem, see Davis, *Non-Vicious Circle*.

[2] Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines are two of the most celebrated figures of the Haitian Revolution.

The trope of the nègre marron, the enslaved person who escapes the plantation system to a clandestine life in the hills, is a powerful one in Antillean revolutionary imagery. Glissant calls the nègre marron "le seul vrai héros populaire des Antilles" (*Discours* 180). This search for an Antillean equivalent to the Western archetype of the hero speaks to the long history of Western influence in the Caribbean, as well as the hierarchies formed through it. Cilas Kemedjio calls the "quest for founder-ancestors" an "obsession […] that torments writers and critics of Antillean literature" (229). Chamoiseau suggests that Antillean literature held on to figures like Louverture and Delgrès, who could fit this Western mold.

While a few historical accounts of the events of 1802 started to appear in the 1970s,[3] Antillean literature has filled in the unknowable gaps and kept the figure of Delgrès in the cultural imaginary. Daniel Maximin's novel, *Isolé soleil* (published the same year as Glissant's *Discours antillais*), speaks to the controversial status of the Martinican-born Delgrès as a specifically Guadeloupian hero. One of the main characters, Adrien, writes of the Guadeloupian people: "nous sommes bien le people le moins chauvin de la Terre : nous avons érigé des statues à nos trois héros nationaux : Colomb le Génois, Schœlcher le Parisien, et Delgrès le Martiniquais ! " (85). Of the few heroes they do visually commemorate, none actually originates from the island. He goes on to address the explosion at Matouba: "Pourquoi s'étendre sur un acte si peu en accord avec la chronique de nos soumissions ? […] J'ai pensé une fois que Delgrès s'était sacrifié, coupable d'avoir nourri des rêves de surhomme dans un pays de cuisinières" (85). For him, the question is not whether to celebrate a suicide as heroic, but rather, whether the heroic act of dying before returning to slavery can be emblematic of what he describes as a

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[3]The most notable of these is Germain Saint-Ruf's *L'épopée Delgres: La Guadeloupe sous la Révolution française (1789-1802)*, L'Harmattan, 1977.

weak-willed people. There is a tension that surrounds this act, a certain shame around not following in Delgrès's footsteps when faced with the violence of oppression.

Laurent Dubois, H. Adlai Murdoch, and Nick Nesbitt, among others, have examined how the explosion at Matouba (which in 1989 was named after Delgrès) has been recuperated in commemorative sites, events, and novels. I focus my analysis on the memorialization of Delgrès in a graphic novel: Patrick Chamoiseau and Georges Puisy's *Les Antilles sous Bonaparte: Delgrès.* I argue this work serves as an effective point of entry from which to examine the creation of historical collective memory and the national hero in the French Caribbean, because of Delgrès's contested presence, not necessarily front and center, but rather in the shadowed wings of Antillean history. The graphic novel genre is unique in that it has a certain pedagogical character, an ability to shape the collective imaginary. Graphic novels are more accessible to a wider swath of the literate or semi-literate public than traditional prose non-fiction or novels. In addition, with the tradition of *bande dessinée* (BD) being so deeply rooted in a Franco-Belgian (or even American) context, representing Antillean history through this format creates another level of dialogue between Glissant's conception of Western History and Antillean Relational histories. Graphic novels also engage the reader in a unique way of participatory narrative construction. Text and image placement in the panels encourages readers to build the story for themselves, imagining motion through still shots and filling in the gaps from what the panels omit. In fact, one of the indisputable fathers of comics theory, Thierry Groensteen, will argue that "every panel is an interpretable, because it enters into *relations*, over and above the level of the narrative, with other panels, whether close to it or distant, which determine the final meaning of what is delivered in the image" (emphasis added, 91). This collaborative nature strengthens the role of the reader in inscribing important events or historical figures into the collective

imaginary. Glissant describes his conception of non-history as a "discontinu dans le continu,"

impossible for the Antillean collective consciousness to wholly capture in any total way

(*Discours* 224). In their fragmented frames and panels—in the multiple ways they can be read—

graphic novels represent a sort of discontinuity within a continuous narrative, therefore making

them a suitable medium to house the variability and inconsistencies of non-history.

I am limiting my focus to Patrick Chamoiseau's contributions to *bande dessinée*, briefly

as an artist, and then as a writer.[4] In addition to his more well-known novels and essays, like

Texaco (1992) and *Éloge de la Créolité* (1989), he has written screenplays, creole fables,

contributed to museum catalogues, and projects with photographers and artists. Chamoiseau has

collaborated on only three *bande dessinée* publications; however, they occupy an important place

in his oeuvre, as they were the first medium that allowed him to place Creole and French

together in one text. Even though he claims it was only after reading Glissant's *Malemort* (1975)

that he was fully aware of the potential to "create a new literature" that represented all linguistic

sides of him, comics were the gateway to what would become a very natural synthesis:

> As a teenager, I wrote poetry in a very pure and refined French, while in the cartoons, a less noble art form, I'd mix Creole and French in the captions. I created an alloy of the two. It was all a bit schizophrenic. I had two personalities: a superego that was very French, and another part that was freer, more secret, more underground, which found expression in the cartoons. (Taylor 132)

For Chamoiseau, the "dominated language" was appropriate for "des histoires racontées en

contrebande" (*Écrire* 67) and the comic genre, as an art form with fewer stakes, was the

appropriate medium to transport that contraband. Critic Wendy Knepper understands

Chamoiseau's comic books as "evidence of a rebel sensibility" that would continue to shape his

oeuvre (66). Focusing on these graphic novels in particular will provide new insight into

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[4]While Chamoiseau is the common thread tying these works together, the collaborative authorial effort (between writer and illustrator) in each must not be lost.

Chamoiseau's trajectory as an author. Because Chamoiseau was one of Martinique's first bédéistes, on a larger scale, we can start from the genre's beginnings to trace its evolving relationship with history, politics, and collective memory, as well as the reasons behind this evolution.

Early in Chamoiseau's career, we can see two versions of national hero take shape. One, in Louis Delgrès, a search for the Antillean equivalent to the Western model (*Les Antilles sous Bonaparte: Delgrès,* illustrated by Georges Puisy and published in 1981). The second, an anti-hero in Django, a fictionalized, comical stereotype of a rebel outlaw (*Le retour de Monsieur Coutcha*, written by Tony Delsham and published in 1984). Perhaps these two works, in addition to Glissant's influential texts,[5] and a shifting political climate, allowed Chamoiseau to move beyond an initial comparative stage; whether Antillean counterpart or antithesis, the point of reference for the hero is a European one. In 1996, he claims to have "long ago" abandoned the notion of the hero he describes as a Toussaint, Delgrès or Dessalines figure in the quotation above. His conception of the hero shifted from mythical superhuman to one of quotidian resistance: "Alors que notre héros, c'est moins le nègre marron que s'est dressé, parce que celui-là pour les Petites Antilles il a été complètement laminé, nos héros sont ceux qui sont restés sur l'habitation et qui ont survécu par des ruses, le Détour, l'opacité" (Plumecocq 134-5). Like the Creole of Chamoiseau's texts, which exists in and resists French, the Antillean hero is one who resists it from within, instead of escaping the system of oppression. Even though this quote was in reference to characters from his 1988 novel, *Solibo Magnifique*, we see a similar kind of new hero in *Encyclomerveille d'un tueur* (illustrated by Thierry Ségur). This 2009 graphic novel

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[5]Even this novel ties back to the visual, and the comic strip more specifically. Chamoiseau says after he read it he felt compelled to draw: "Quelque chose s'était pourtant produit entre ce texte et moi, car après cette lecture, je dessinai un jeune homme titubant dans les rues de Fort-de-France, sous le regard compatissant de deux gobeurs-de-mouches, dont l'un murmure à l'autre : 'It vient de lire Malemort d'Édouard Glissant'" (*Écrire* 88).

retains very few similarities to the previous two. It is still in dialogue with stylistic elements and narrative structures of the Franco-Belgian genre, but it sets up a new kind of creolized national hero. A bildungsroman of sorts, *Encyclomerveille* presents a young protagonist who is not concerned with absolutes, a cultural go-between: what the text presents as a "passeur de mondes." This deconstruction of absolutes spreads into the illustrative style as well.

While very little scholarship exists on Chamoiseau's contributions to the graphic novel genre, I argue we can gain a new appreciation for how the departments of Martinique and Guadeloupe have grappled with the creation of "national" heroes while remaining politically attached to France. Examining the graphic novel genre in the context of Antillean historical narratives allows us to access the kind of subaltern history that Chakrabarty writes towards in *Provincializing Europe*. For him, it is a question of visibility, of revelation: "The practice of subaltern history would aim to take history, the code, to its limits in order to make its unworking visible" (96). The works I highlight here play with this quest for visibility on multiple levels.[6] Moreover, *Encyclomerveille*, along with its disavowal of the Western hero, presents a visual (and visible) depiction of a Relational history and time that detaches from linearity and uniformity.

Delgrès: Visualizing the Myth

At first glance, the one-color print *Les Antilles sous Bonaparte: Delgrès*, seems stylistically rather unremarkable. There is a narrative voice in addition to intradiegetic dialogue; the figures are depicted realistically with a mix of establishing shots and close-ups. The same character is represented multiple times on one page; but as natural connoisseurs of graphic novel semiotics, we don't think twice in interpreting what is represented simultaneously on the fixed

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[6]Even as these works fight for visibility, their readership remains limited. Both *Les Antilles* and *Encyclomerveille* claim to be the first in a series that was never continued (although this is not so rare for BD publishing in general) and *Les Antilles* et *Le Retour* are difficult to find.

page as a chronology of the movement of time. These elements are what we expect because the Franco-Belgian tradition of *bande dessinée* set them as precedents. As readers, our eyes have been trained to gravitate to the graphic weight of a panel, to read the panels more or less from top left to bottom right.[7] The formal elements being what they are, reading *Les Antilles* as a response to that tradition is somewhat unavoidable, even if the stylistic similarities to the Franco-Belgian tradition were unintentional. However, looking at examples of both Puisy's and Chamoiseau's other comic illustrations (which vary significantly from that of *Les Antilles*), seems to deny a total ignorance on the authors' behalf of how they chose to visually align this work with its Western counterparts. In other words, the stylistic similarities of *Les Antilles* to traditional Franco-Belgian BD were no accident.

There is a certain awareness that runs through the work as a whole. The authors fully capitalize on the pedagogical nature of the graphic novel genre in their explicitly didactic preface:

> Cet album IGNACE/DELGRES est le premier d'une longue série qui réveillera tous les instants de notre Histoire Caraïbe pour saluer les Héros oubliés et leur faire enfin des sépultures, évoquer ces grands hommes qui errent encore dans les limbes de nos indifférences.

Even though they claim a desire for objectivity, the impassioned rhetoric of this quasi-manifesto shines through. There is also a vocabulary of visuality that permeates the text: a new dawn is not presently "envisageable," having "yeux fermés" on a shadowed Antillean past, the need to "éclairer" that past in all its "éclats." If they had the necessary memory, the island's present situation would be "mieux prévisible." This diction, along with the archival sepia tone chosen for the one-color print both signal the importance of visually representing this story in creating the

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[7]See Will Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative*, Norton, 2008; and Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics* (1999), translated by Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen, UP of Mississippi, 2007.

metaphorical statues to these forgotten heroes. The authors even explain their intended audience: "pour que les enfants de toutes les îles y plongent, que les parents s'y attardent, que les jeunes se la prêtent, que les Enseignants l'utilisent avec succès; pour que les traduction soient aisées, dans une démarche totalement Caraïbe, nous avons choisi **la Bande Dessinée**" (emphasis in original). The BD genre as an accessible medium, and as easier to translate due to its visual components, is well-suited to their inclusive aspirations. They do not shy away from actually using the term "hero" in the preface or in the text itself, whose fourth section is entitled "La course héroïque."

In addition to the narrative captions and speech balloons, the authors position themselves in conversation with historiography by inserting select citations from historian Oruno Lara that complement the storyline. The back endpaper also includes two further suggestions of consultable historical references, as another way of validating the historical accuracy of the graphic novel. But, they also include fragmented verses of Césaire's poem "Mémorial de Louis Delgrès" as epigraphs to two of the final sections. They cite Césaire and Lara by name, but give no further contextualization or reference to the works where the quotes originate. These intertextual references perform the type of exchange between the historical and literary that Glissant espoused in *Le Discours antillais*. Both *Le Discours* and *Les Antilles* were published in 1981, so there is little to suggest that the authors were strictly responding to Glissant's text. However, Glissant was a significant influence on Chamoiseau and the two collaborated up until Glissant's death in 2011, so we can assume a certain mutual knowledge was shared between the two.

The endpaper also contains a transcription of Delgrès's celebrated proclamation that was posted around Basse-Terre several weeks before the explosion at Matouba. Addressed to "l'univers entier," the text is also one very conscious of its own historical potential. The

language sets the stage for the explosion as a martyred act of the innocent and hopeless: "La résistance à l'oppression est un droit naturel. La Divinité même ne peut être offensée que nous défendions notre cause." The reference to the second article of the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen directly connects the abolitionist cause to the newly formed French government. Not unlike Chamoiseau and Puisy's call for Antillean history to be reclaimed by present generations for future posterity, Delgrès's final sentence also speaks to his own inscription into the collective imaginary of future generations: "Et toi, Postérité, accorde une larme à nos malheurs, et nous mourrons satisfaits !" More so perhaps than the rhetoric of the actual document, its reproduction in full is worth noting as an effort to mythologize the figure of Delgrès. Germain Saint-Ruf, the author of the first widely-circulated monograph on Delgrès, accords a unique importance to the sanctity of this document: "La proclamation de Delgrès mérite d'être lue et relue. Chaque Antillais devrait la posséder et la conserver avec la même ferveur qu'un chrétien a pour la Bible. Elle devrait constituer un thème spécial d'analyse dans les écoles antillaises" (110). The proclamation is also reproduced in full in Maximin's *Isolé soleil* (48-9). Seeing it reproduced in this way, with no critical commentary, starts to give it the archival, almost biblical quality Saint-Ruf favors.

The text of *Les Antilles* also depicts Delgrès as already aware of his future mythological status, or at least of his role as a representative of the Antillean people. When another resistance fighter suggests an act of pure revenge, Delgrès refuses his request by saying "nos actes doivent être sans équivoque et dénués de toutes passions… Ils appartiennent déjà à l'histoire d'un people: celle des Antilles" (35). The panels on page 46 visually represent the symbolism of Delgrès that is already present with his contemporaries. Wounded, Delgrès reclines on two barrels of gun powder (foreshadowing his final martyrdom). The sequence begins with a one-on-

one conversation and quickly expands to a crowd of countless others, with their eyes fixed not only on Delgrès, but as another angle shows, out to the reader as well, as a sort of call to action. As the crowd shouts "liberté," Delgrès switches to Creole to shout "Libèté manmaye!" mirroring his rebellious act with Chamoiseau's own "freer, more secret, more underground" sensibility (Taylor 132). The panels on page 27 use a faded overlay of Delgrès's face onto his army heading into battle to show how the idea of him is already overlapped onto the collective consciousness of the men shouting "vivre libre ou mourir!" in unison.

In a similar metaphorical maneuver as Césaire's poem, which created a pedestal on which to place Delgrès's name, the last panel of *Les Antilles* transforms all of its three heroes (Delgrès, Ignace and Pélage) from men into stars. The caption reads: "La Guadeloupe replongea dans la nuit… mais cette fois, Ignace Delgrès et tous les autres, y faisaient des étoiles" (50). The visual dichotomy between light and darkness recalls the preface's vocabulary. Even though the text ambiguously extends this mythologized designation to "all those" who participated in the attack, visually, we clearly see the brightly-lit iconic busts of the three protagonists, with Delgrès in the foreground as the largest of the three. The single fist placed alongside the busts may also be a visual allusion to Césaire's poem, which speaks of a fist that "shatters the mist" of oppression (Davis 80). The shackles foregrounded in the above panel echo Césaire's description of this mist as "tissu de bruits de ferrements de chaînes sans clefs" (78).

The Politics of Early Caribbean *Bande Dessinée*

A comparative look at *Les Antilles* alongside a similar representation of Toussaint Louverture reveals more of the underlying political agenda behind graphic novel

memorializations of Caribbean heroes at this time. *Toussaint Louverture: Le Napoléon Noir* was first published in 1985 by Nicolas Saint-Cyr (text) and Pierre Briens (illustration). Another spotlight on a male revolutionary leader, *Toussaint* resembles *Les Antilles* in form as well; but it is a full-color print and, if anything, comes even closer to a traditional Franco-Belgian style. The biggest difference between the two graphic novels is that *Toussaint* includes none of the explanatory paratext of *Les Antilles*. However, Charles Forsdick's close reading of this work shows that it is no less political in its construction. Forsdick contends that the selective representation of the Haitian Revolution is a "revisionist effort to recruit [Toussaint] to a French Republican narrative" (199) at the moment directly preceding the bicentennial of the French Revolution when attempts were being made to have France recognize Louverture at the Pantheon. Because of this politically charged climate, he calls *Toussaint* one of the "more striking example[s] of the conscription of the Haitian heroes to contemporary contexts" (199). However, Forsdick describes a decades-long attempt at mythologizing Toussaint in BD, often with an eye on influencing US-Haitian relations. He points to a 1941 issue of Real Life Comics, which featured Toussaint as one of the "world's greatest heroes" (198) and a 1966 comic which simplified Toussaint's complicated past to mold him into a role model for young African Americans (199).

Chamoiseau is attentive to the direct connection between literature and politics and the way certain political climates affect literary preoccupations. His style is often seen in opposition to earlier generations who wrote within the confines of colonization, and who were criticized for their preoccupation with, and even mimicry of, the colonizers. When he addresses these critiques, he highlights political factors at play above all else: "Cette littérature fut d'abord très centrée sur le colonisateur, mais, en même temps elle s'est toujours trouvée dans des périodes

d'asphyxie auxquelles il fallait absolument réagir" (Ette 12). The birth of *bande dessinée*[8] in the 1970s and 80s in Martinique coincides with what appears to be a ripe moment to address the silence of an imposed non-history. Chamoiseau confirms a certain optimism for the Martinican independence movement after the 1981 election of François Mitterrand, an anticipation that political change would follow the first socialist president of the Fifth Republic (Taylor 131). That year also saw the publication of Glissant's *Discours Antillais*, Maximin's *Isolé soleil*, and Chamoiseau and Puisy's *Les Antilles*. By 1989, the fort where Delgrès fought was named after him, but as Laurent Dubois notes, it wasn't until 1998 with the symbolic incorporation of Delgrès and Toussaint Louverture into the Pantheon "among the ranks of Republican heroes" that the former colonial power more officially recognized "that [Delgrès and Toussaint] had chosen the side of right in taking up arms against France" (312). In a certain sense, the political motivation for creating heroes through the graphic novel "worked," however flattened that figure might become to its own possible detriment.

      Toussaint Louverture: Le Napoléon Noir—unlike *Les Antilles sous Bonaparte: Delgrès*—went through multiple reprintings in the 2000s, with slight, but revealing title revisions. *Toussaint Louverture et la révolution de Saint-Domingue (Haiti)* came out in 2003 and again in 2008, while 2011 saw the same novel with the minimalist title: *Toussaint Louverture.* Initially published by the larger Hachette, the 2000s reissues were overseen by Éditions Orphie, which originated in Réunion and continues to promote literature from overseas departments and territories. Eliminating the comparison to Napoleon in the title could be an attempt to distance the project from criticism like Forsdick's (in name only, as the panels and editorial decisions

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[8]Christophe Cassiau-Haurie, director of public services at the Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire de Strasbourg, identifies the 1980s as the starting point for the first published albums coming out of Martinique and Guadeloupe, following the period of comics in monthly serials like M.G.G. in the 1970s. A relatively late foray onto the BD scene that Cassiau-Haurie attributes to the lack of Antillean publishing houses.

within the work remain unaltered). While the comparative framing of Napoleon suggests a pull towards France, referencing "Saint-Domingue" next to "Haiti" emphasizes the repellence from the colonial power marked by this post-independence name change. Despite its similar subject matter, format, and original publication date, *Les Antilles* did not go through the same reissues as *Toussaint* and is currently out of print. One possible explanation for this oversight, especially in light of Chamoiseau's increasing presence on the national and international literary scene from the 1980s onward, could be the timeliness of the fight to represent Delgrès in a certain light. Like Chamoiseau had said of previous generations: the 1980s were the moment for him when "il fallait absolument réagir" in the way he did. It could also be related to the more complicated nature of representing Delgrès as a "national" hero. Nick Nesbitt in fact sees Delgrès's story as different from those of Louverture, Victor Schoelcher or Césaire, who all made memorable strides toward loosening France's restrictive hold on its colonies. Delgrès, however, remains "tied and limited" to the system and his self-immolation will be remembered as a "hysterical acting out of insubordination in an objectively blocked situation devoid of all other alternative," one that "effectively obscured the truth of an Antillean militant subjectivity for generations to come" ("Early" 945). His story was perhaps impossible to make and maintain visible in this way.

The events surrounding the French and Haitian Revolutions were not the only moments to be revived by Caribbean comics of the 1980s. Loosely veiled critiques of contemporary neo-colonialist dynamics permeated the beginning of the genre in Martinique, more often than not through a reliance on other more explicit past struggles. *La Tribu Caraïbe*, published in 1985 by Éditions Desormeaux (the same publisher of *Les Antilles*), is a collection of shorter comic strips that provides various vignettes of an imagined pre-colonial life. Author Pancho (a pseudonym for Bruno Villain, who moved from Loir-et-Cher to Martinique in the 1980s) sets a tone that walks

71

the line between vulgar humor and sarcastic self-deprecation and derision. He presents the native Arawaks "ceux qui, quoi qu'on revendique ou qu'on fasse aujourd'hui, sont les seuls véritables propriétaires des lieux" (2) who struggle against the colonizing, cannibalistic Caribs. At the heart of this satirical commentary is a desire to set the official historical record "straight." Not unlike *Les Antilles*, Pancho includes a brief, however humorous, explanation of his archival and didactic intents: "grâce à cet album, les petits écoliers des isles vont enfin connaître la vérité sur leurs prestigieux prédécesseurs et constater que déjà, en ce temps-là, on savait rigoler." Claiming to have "irrefutable evidence" that Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Caribbean was "pas du tout comme on vous l'a appris à l'école," that was not in libraries or governmental space, but "les cagibis les plus humides, les tiroirs les plus douteux," Pancho distances his text from any official narrative. He had to "soudoyer les gardiens de musées pour qu'ils taisent et les caraïbologues pour qu'ils parlent." Even though his approach and positioning is quite different from Chamoiseau and Puisy's, his work reinforces the pattern of politically motivated struggles to decenter official narratives taking place in 1980s Caribbean *bande dessinée*.

Django: Major (&) Anti-hero

The repetitive calls for *liberté/libèté* through the text of *Les Antilles* serves to reinforce Delgrès's struggle for freedom above all else. His was not a political battle against France as a nation, but a humanist one. In fact, his devotion to France presides over his decisions until the end. During a heated debate over possible actions for Guadeloupe to take, he asserts: "Ce qui importe, c'est que la Guadeloupe soit libre ! La liberté m'obsède !... Si la France peut nous laisser la liberté, restons avec elle. Mais… si elle veut nous l'enlever : combattons la !" (15). Even the title keeps him and the islands not just inextricably linked to French authority, but

"under" it. Conversely, the graphic novel Chamoiseau illustrated under the pseudonym Abel searches for a certain freedom through a total rebellion against figures of authority.

Although the text of *Le Retour de Monsieur Coutcha* is attributed to Tony Delsham, the introduction, which contextualizes the figure of the Major in Martinican society, is signed by its illustrator, Abel. Like the preface to *Les Antilles*, this introduction lays a pedagogical framework for how we should approach its main character. It also shows itself to be conscious of its potential readership outside of Martinique. This audience would not be adequately familiar with Majors to identify Monsieur Coutcha as one, or even with the comic series of the same name that the preface lauds as "un classique de l'humour antillais."[9] Yet out of the three BD from Chamoiseau that blend Creole into a primarily French text, *Monsieur Coutcha* is the one with the most Creole and no translations, whereas both *Les Antilles* and *Encyclomerveille* have far fewer occurrences of Creole words and often provide French translations. Wendy Knepper addresses the paradoxical nature of Chamoiseau's unique language matrix as both naturally inclusive and one not fully comfortable for either individually. While French speakers need to learn another language to fully appreciate Chamoiseau's Creole specificities, Knepper argues that for Creole speakers "the transcription of an oral language produces a kind of distancing effect. Thus Chamoiseau's free play with French-Creole languages is utopian to the extent that it projects a nonexistent shared psycho-social reality" (Knepper 66). Written solely in French, perhaps the preface speaks less to shaping a Martinican collective consciousness, than to educating the international public at large how Antillean non-history creates a non-hero hero: an antithetical response to the Western hero mold. At the same time, the preface could also be intended for a Martinican posterity that is no longer as familiar with the cultural climate of the 1970s and 80s.

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[9]The referenced series ran in M.G.G., or Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyane, the small publishing house run by Tony Delsham in the 1970s. Abel dates the first publication to 1972.

Abel categorizes the Major as a longstanding figure within colonial Antillean society, with the recognizable characteristics of a certain Antillean stereotype: a large, wide-brimmed hat (*un bakoua*), a long, wide mustache, and a macho attitude. Majors were territorial and had a short fuse, sometimes provoking fights amongst each other, but mainly with the official powers that be: "Le Major cristallisait la révolte de tous face à la déveine quotidienne de la vie coloniale." The main conflict in the narrative is between Coutcha and stereotypically overweight policemen, portrayed as weak and afraid of the outlaw. Abel admits that this image of a "hero" is problematic, "ambivalent" in his words: "le Major, généralement haïssable, était admiré et aimé (donc devenait héroïque) parce qu'il résistait." Nevertheless, the word "hero" appears four times in the page-and-a-half introduction. Coutcha enforces his own law in the town, which causes chaos, but he is one of the only people brazen enough to clash with the corrupt police in order to protect the exploited townspeople. The preface explains why such an illicit character fills the role of "hero": "dans un peuple dominé, sans histoire ou héro reconnus, [les Majors] constituaient un formidable exutoire à la rancœur. L'imagerie populaire les installait dans une place à laquelle Delgrès, Ignace, Toussaint, Séchou, Mackendal, ou autres nègre marrons n'ont jamais accédé." The only way Coutcha is not a Major is in his ability to make us laugh; Abel admits this comedic element is never a quality in actual Majors.

At the same time, Coutcha's full name is Eusèbe Hyppolite-Anastase *Ignace* de Bathélemy Coutcha—a possible reference to the Ignace that fought alongside Delgrès. There is still a Western element to this "typical" Antillean figure. His given nickname, one that gets used throughout the majority of the graphic novel, is Django. The introduction explains the choice as "en hommage, en souvenir de, à cause de, ou pour se moquer du seul film qu'il ait vu de sa vie." The reference to the iconic 1966 Spaghetti Western of the same name, directed by Sergio

Corbucci, speaks to the pervasiveness of the American Western genre, and the inability for cultures to be totally walled off from influence. If our goal is determining whether or not Coutcha is quintessentially Antillean or an imitation American, perhaps *Monsieur Coutcha* directs us to explore the possibility that he could be both at once: that we need a more rhizomatic understanding of identities to explain the Caribbean experience.

The preface sets up an ambiguous relationship to Time and History. Abel explains where the figure of Coutcha came from without citing any specifics: "Une rumeur que nous n'avons jamais pu (ou voulu) vérifier, fut à l'origine du personnage. Elle disait dans une île des Caraïbes, au centre d'un quartier populaire interdit à la police, un homme se faisait appeler Django et maniait le coutelas avec un art inégalable." Careful to avoid any mythologizing Genesis story, Abel's historical archive is an unverifiable rumor. He also follows Glissant's resistance to periodization along numerical dates (*Discours* 270-3). Instead of giving a precise date and place of birth for Django, he affirms it was: "Une nuit de la saison-mangots, juste après l'époque de l'Amiral, mais bien avant le cyclone Edith, dans une case de journalier agricole entre Macouba et Grand-rivière." In other words, a gray area of about eight kilometers and 18 years, but one that bases itself in relation to the landscape and significant natural or political markers, rather than pinpointing a mere date. Even though the preface focuses so heavily on contextualizing the figure of the Major within Martinican history, along with the background of Django himself, all of the action unfolds in the immediacy of the present. Unlike the two other graphic novels, there is no "retelling." It is less concerned with consecrating any sort of record of history than with presenting a contemporary hero who provides a glimpse into everyday conflicts and lived experience on the island. The only materials resembling an attempt at archival work are not in the narrative itself, but in the paratext. Aside from the introduction, there is a fictional letter

represented on the back cover, but it is dated a year after the book's publication. A notice of leave-of-absence from the head police officer character after one too many encounters with Django, the letter is made to look worn, like it has been conserved, even though it is future dated.

Apollon Chrysogène: *Passeur de mondes*

In some ways, like *Les Antilles* or the introduction to *Le retour de Monsieur Coutcha*, *Encyclomerveille d'un tueur* consciously positions itself as a historical archive, an encyclopedia of knowledge. The first panels present a metafictional textual and visual discussion of the story about to unfold, showing us the cover of the fictional book we are about to "open" by turning the page. The narrative captions convey the inner monologue of the protagonist as an older man reflecting on the "metamorphosis" of his youth with a quill in his hand, indicating that he is the author and protagonist of the forthcoming tale. The last panel, the one the reader naturally touches to turn to the next page, shows his hand reaching to open the imposing tome. But its title signals a shift from the traditional narrative of History or Knowledge. The neologism "Encyclomerveille" efficiently summarizes the largest theme of the story itself; while evoking the rational, Enlightenment ideals of the encyclopedia, it immediately distorts them and creates something that—while still an amalgam—is at the same time altogether new. Unlike the previous graphic novels, in this encyclopedia of supernatural knowledge there is no manifesto on its intended usage, no preface to explain the main characters or contextualize the story in any way. The next pages thrust the reader into a supernatural world of monsters with no clarification on who they are, where they came from, or why they attack the protagonist's family. Its authors relinquish more of the work of reading and interpreting to the reader, perhaps because the stakes have changed. The work is less measuring up to the Western model, more in relation to it, with a critical slant. The neologism points to a double meaning; is it a fantastic encyclopedia or a

critique of encyclopedias as fantasy? There is no longer a straight trajectory to follow in order to capture a "true" meaning; rather, it is in the process of interpretation that the reader participates in recreating the multiplicities of time and space the story attempts to convey.

Encyclomerveille d'un tueur is actually the name of a series, of which exists only this first volume entitled, *L'orphelin de Cocoyer grands-bois*.[10] The story follows a teenage-aged orphaned boy, Apollon Chrysogène, whose parents were killed by a monster from another realm. The boy is taken in by a gravedigger, Nicéphore Mazurka, who becomes a mentor of sorts and who soon comes to reveal the secrets of his cemetery of Cocoyer Grands-Bois. We learn that the cemetery, as the junction point between life and death, is a more porous place of interchange between multiple realties, and if one has the right timing and the right tools, one can experience them simultaneously. Midday and midnight are the times most ripe for this passage between the so-called "monde aveuglés" and the "mondes de merveilles"; however, micro rifts can appear at other times and become more frequent as the stability between these worlds continues to weaken.

Encyclomerveille explores depictions of the supernatural and of identity in a creolizing world in turning away from absolutisms of History and linear Time. The fantastic tale revolves around different ways of seeing, and visual elements in both the text and illustrations exploit this theme to its full potential. Mazurka explains the types of people in this world: "les jean sotte qui ne voient que le réel, les jean fol qui ne voient que la merveille, et les initiés qui peuvent atteindre les deux" (11). While the text visually—but not phonetically—destabilizes French spelling and agreement rules, Thierry Ségur's illustrations break down the barriers between the natural and supernatural worlds, while also playing with the normative boundaries of the graphic novel genre. It is only after seeing his visual representations of rifts in the time-space continuum

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[10]Unfortunately, the series was put on permanent hiatus due to low sales of the first volume.

that the reader is able to follow the same path of the protagonist to becoming an "initié":

someone the text describes as capable of seeing both the real and the supernatural in

simultaneous cohabitation, where previously the latter had been invisible.

More than an initiate, Apollon is destined to become a "passeur de mondes" (49).

Because this first volume of the series does not resolve all of the loose ends of the plot, nor

answer all of the questions asked, there is no exact definition yet provided for this term.

However, other narrative clues, along with our understanding of how Apollon is different from

other "initiates," give us enough to theorize what being a *passeur* would entail. Unlike its

relatively neutral cognate in English, or even the French verb form "passer," the noun "passeur"

connotes a more clandestine passage. Sometimes translated as "ferryman," sometimes

"smuggler," sometimes "go-between," like the World War II-era Resistance sympathizers of the

same name who helped people escape across the border—often through treacherous mountain

passes to evade capture—*passeurs* prefer the side streets over the main road to transport their

goods. Larousse's literary definition of the term best suits Apollon's case: "Personne qui fait

connaître et propage une œuvre, une doctrine, un savoir, servant ainsi d'intermédiaire entre deux

cultures, deux époques" (Larousse). But Apollon, who can see multiple realities and

temporalities simultaneously can pass between worlds, still manages to maintain some of the

covert deviation connoted by the term: the Glissantian "Détour" Chamoiseau ascribes to his new

type of hero. Chamoiseau refers to the heroes of the Antilles as "ceux qui sont restés sur

l'habitation et qui ont survécu par des ruses, le Détour, l'opacité" (Plumecocq 134-5).

In creating this new *passeur*-hero, the text navigates an intricate web of intertextual

references to destabilize the relationship between naming and identity. Like *Monsieur Coutcha*'s

playfully complex treatment of naming, *Encyclomerveille* suggests points of connection from

antiquity and western European traditions, but never fully claims them as verifiable certainties. By tangling itself in a multitude of connections, it disconnects itself from the stability of any one lineage. Given the Caribbean's legacy of slavery, tracing family histories through blood lineage is a problematic foundation on which to build an identity (*Discours* 223). For the majority of this first volume, the young protagonist has no name at all, reinforcing his lost status as an unbaptized orphan. He later discovers that he shares the name Apollon Chrysogène with his late father, who was also a hunter of these otherworldly monsters. However, his power as a *passeur* does not stem entirely from his family history, as it was a monster who allegedly transferred some ability to Apollon during the attack that killed his father. Apollon or Apollo, the Greek god of music, poetry, light and truth, mixed with Chrysogène, a neologism from Chateaubriand meaning "born into riches, gold," the main character is often represented with an orange, golden glow. The color choice may be reflective of this name, but the text never gives it any etymological attention. The same goes for Nicéphore Mazurka, another extremely unique name. "Nicéphore" is also of Greek origins, and while it is attached to several historical figures, it may refer to Nicéphore Niépce, a French inventor who in the mid 1820s produced the first photographic image of a real-world scene. This name seems to fit with the character's capacity for seeing the real as it truly is—that is, intertwined with multiple realities. Mazurka is the name of a polish folk dance to a triple-metered pace, which does not seem to align with the character's disciplined demeanor, although he does recount tales to the beat of a drum and an audience member calls him a clairvoyant storyteller (10). Because no attention is ever given to anyone's name, the possibility remains open that the naming choices could be pure invention and the connections coincidental.

More of a fantastic tale (*conte*) than a realistic narrative, *Encyclomerveille* seems to follow Glissant's assertion that the *conte* genre in the Antilles serves to repair a historical lack: "de nous sauver de la croyance que l'Histoire est la première et fondamentale dimension de l'homme, croyance héritée de l'Occident ou imposée par lui" (262). Historical references or influences are often brushed aside in the text, in a tongue-in-cheek critical move that questions the importance and origins of cultural reference points. When the skeletal ghost who presents himself to the young Apollon as his new professor asks to be given a name, Apollon settles on Hamlet, to which the ghost replies: "Facile et ridicule! En plus, tu ne sais même pas qui est Shakespeare!" (24). When Nicéphore takes his young student to the ghostly directors of the undead, he calls them "the Melchior." Apollon had previously thought of them as mere legend, as some of the ghosts told him one assisted the birth of Jesus, the other became a friend of the prophet Mohamed, and yet another knew Buddha. In fact, the Gospel of Mathew does name Melchior as one of the Magi. However, Nicéphore dismisses all of these claims, saying "Pfff… les morts racontent souvent des blagues" (43). This resistance to a fixed corollary of any sort reflects the instance of a chaotic diversity of being. A hero who is not linked to any patriarchal lineage, tradition or legacy is freeing in that it allows him to repossess his own creolized identity and history. It is this Relation of histories that allows one to "retrouver son temps vrai et son identité : poser en des termes inédits la question du pouvoir." (*Discours* 276).

At its core, *Encyclomerveille* grapples with questions of identity in the face of globalization and the ever-present question of the particular's relationship to the universal. It is however not unique in its attempt to break out from classifications and rigid constructions of identity; much of Chamoiseau's oeuvre strives to reconsider history and the role of folklore, and *Encyclomerveille* follows in the storytelling tradition. In this case, placing this story within a

fantastical world allows Chamoiseau and Ségur to distance their hero from other influences. Chamoiseau claims the "marvelous real" genre is indigenous to the Antillean experience: "le merveilleux, par définition est dans le conte. Tout naturellement, c'est ce merveilleux-là qui irrigue aujourd'hui les textes et a irrigué même souterrainement – les textes littéraires antillais, sans pour autant qu'il y ait une influence d'Haiti ou d'ailleurs" (Ludwig 13). Where this *conte* is especially unique is in its visual treatment of creolization through, despite, and/or because of globalization, in its representation of the chaotic diverse that, at certain points, becomes too much for even the graphic novel form to contain.

Chamoiseau's collaboration with Jean Bernabé and Raphael Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité* (1989), begins by positing its central term as "l'agrégat interactionnel ou transactionnel, des éléments culturels caraïbes, européens, africains, asiatiques, et levantins, que le joug de l'Histoire a réunis sur le même sol." (26). Of course, in the years to follow, Chamoiseau will continue to nuance this initial definition in an attempt to get away from these territorially bound categories, moving away from Créolité to creolization. I still see *Éloge* as a good place to start in an examination of the graphic novel as the visual medium par excellence for this philosophy because of what follows: "La Créolité c'est 'le monde diffracté mais recomposé,' un maelström de signifiés dans un seul signifiant: une Totalité" (27). What is a graphic novel, other than a world diffracted but recomposed, a way of more efficiently representing a totality of signifieds. It is a way to access another mode of thinking, a reordering of the world that can escape reality but still exist within it, a representation that troubles linear thinking, but still follows some of its rules. Ségur's illustrations allow us to see along with his protagonist, the other realities that exist alongside our own. This understudied work explores the way in which our perception of the world has been shaped and therefore how it can be altered, allowing us to question not only the

existence of multiple realities, but also the possibility of other ways of experiencing the world that run counter to the dominant narrative.

The rifts in the time-space continuum that Apollon experiences are reflected in the destabilization of the graphic novel itself. The frames start out rather traditional in nature and begin to warp as Apollon experiences his first encounter with the other worlds. After this first experience, Ségur begins to play with images that fall in between frames, disrupt and encroach into them. The representations of the rifts actually perform them, as Ségur distorts the characters' bodies in space and turns back time, to reveal the drafts underneath the finished product. One of the most exemplary performances of this instability comes during the novel's biggest rift in which we witness the return of the monster who killed Apollon's parents. The bottom of page 51 reveals a draft version where it had been labeled as 49. The partially erased panel seems to rip from the binding. In the next two-page spread, the creature erupts from a virtual "hole" it creates, showing the same image of page 50 behind it. Going back in time to the drawing's creation, while still remaining within the finished work, effectively represents the multiple temporalities Nicéphore has explained to us. While we tend to think of art as a finished product, Glissant reminds us that behind that apparent stability hides "un tremblement, où la gomme est maîtresse souveraine, mais où le crayon a exercé son libre arbitre" (*Cohée* 211). Ségur reveals this trembling instability as a visual reminder of the unfinished nature of the world, one that is in the process of becoming, never arriving at a finite terminus.

The inclusion of an Adobe illustrator toolbar in the background of one panel is only one of the many nods to the seamless incorporation of technology in the space of this fantastical tale. Modern technology in combination with non-digital techniques allows Nicéphore to connect to the supernatural worlds. Here the technological becomes inseparable from human creation: the

illustrations being created through a mix of hand-drawn and digital techniques. Ségur's

representations of multiple eras of technology in one frame seem to say we cannot escape the

influences of globalization, but we can coexist with them and with other ways of interacting with

the world at the same time. The first panels of the graphic novel offer another example,

presenting the narrator in vintage attire, writing with a quill pen, while also navigating a

futuristic screen surrounded by books, a digital camera, an older monitor, and some unplaceable,

fantastic gadgets. He is seamlessly fusing multiple temporal references into one space, just as the

rifts do, just as aspects of the graphic novel genre do in its more fluid relationship to

representations of time.

A central question for *Encyclomerveille* appears to be: How do we understand something

we cannot see, especially if it is something we have always taken for granted, or never even

knew existed? The illustrations and reliance on "other ways of seeing" seem to offer the

response, as we become "*initiés*" alongside Apollon. Decolonial studies poses a similar question

in its attempt to unmask what Walter Mignolo has termed "the darker side of modernity"

(*Darker*), the lingering influence of coloniality, systemic hegemonic domination that goes

primarily unseen as it is the underlying framework of modern-day societies. In a way similar to

Glissant's call to acknowledge and reconstitute Antillean non-history, or Chakrabarty's assertion

that "provincializing Europe cannot ever be a project of shunning European thought" (225),

decolonial thinking explores the ways in which coloniality has been constructed alongside

modernity, leaving one therefore inextricable from the other. In highlighting the resonances

between the practice of decolonizing aesthetics and *Encyclomerveille*'s own offer to reveal new

ways of seeing and experiencing the world, I'm not arguing for any sort of line of direct

influence, but rather that decolonial thinking on aesthetics and the dual nature of

modernity/coloniality can apply to the Caribbean more broadly, and in this case, to Chamoiseau and Glissant's theories on creolization. What Mignolo and other decolonial scholars attempt to unveil is in fact quite similar to the "domination silencieuse" that Chamoiseau explores in *Ecrire en pays dominé*, which disguises itself as progressive modernity or economic virtue. It is one that hides in plain sight, "germe et se développe à l'intérieur même de ce que l'on est. Qu'insidieuse, elle neutralise les expressions les plus intimes des peuples dominés" (21).

Both Mignolo and Rolando Vasquez delineate the decolonial project of untangling *aesthesis* from questions of Western standards and its framework of aesthetics. They identify aesthetics as an ideal that has been determined by European standards of value and beauty, whereas aesthesis speaks more to the senses that have been relatively ignored or devalued by traditional Western European theories. An article they co-wrote in *Social Text* states: "Decolonial aestheSis starts from the consciousness that the modern/colonial project has implied not only control of the economy, the political, and knowledge, but also control over the senses and perception. Modern aestheTics have played a key role in configuring a canon, a normativity that enabled the disdain and the rejection of other forms of aesthetic practices, or, more precisely, other forms of aestheSis, of sensing and perceiving." (Vasquez). In the same way that *Encyclomerveille* sets up this distinction between "les jean sotte" (those who can see only the real) and "les initiés" (those that can see both the rational and marvelous worlds together), decolonial studies works to reveal the true nature of modernity as inextricably linked to coloniality. Chamoiseau emphasizes a tactile vocabulary when he refers to visual art in *Ecrire en pays dominé*: "Le dessin me sert aujourd'hui à préciser un monde, à confronter une silhouette, à caresser une atmosphère. … Une photo ancienne, une illustration, sont des geysers d'histoires, d'émotions, de sensations inexprimables" (39). This capacity of the image to confront and caress,

to provoke a range of sensations that cannot be accessed otherwise, echoes the decolonial call to revisit a study of aesthesis.

In addition to the parallels of unveiling the realities behind the surface-level real, another link between this work and decolonial thinking is their positioning of Christopher Columbus. Decolonial studies works to locate the beginning of universalizing understandings of Time and History, identifying Christopher Columbus's arrival to the Americas as the starting point for modernity/coloniality. Columbus appears in the graphic novel as well, as the igniting event for the overlapping of worlds and creolizing processes of the intradiegetic world.

Nicéphore, both gravedigger and hired assassin, tracks monsters who have become over hybridized in an attempt to reestablish "un peu d'ordre," as he says (35). He draws a clear connection between colonization and a growing hybridization of the world, when he explains: "Tout se mit à dégénérer quand Christophe Colomb débarqua aux Amériques, la terre commença son unification : les peuples, les dieux et les cultures se mirent à se rencontrer… ce qui jusqu'alors était bien séparé se mit à s'emmêler, et à s'influencer sans fin (33)." These new creatures jeopardized everything that had been governed for millennia by reason, logic, and consciousness, and therefore they posed a threat—inciting fear and "an irrational hatred" (35). In linking colonization to the destabilization of these two types of worlds and the ensuing development of a "composite magma" (34), the text complicates a more simplistic understanding of the multicultural "melting pot." With the possibility for "monstres hybrides, composites, imprévisibles, à la fois humains et animaux aux pouvoirs inconnus" (34), the text raises the question: If we agree with Glissant that synthesis is always an advantage, as long as it doesn't lead to "l'humanisme où s'engluent les bêtas" (*Discours* 23), what then are the true, complex consequences of this clashing of cultures? In an interview with Janice Morgan, published in

translation in 2008, Chamoiseau explains the extent of the creolization process he sees for the future in both positively and negatively charged terms when he says, "We are entering complexity at all levels, all levels—and there will be many reactions: complementary antagonisms, syntheses, hybridizations, ruptures, racisms, fundamentalisms—all that. This is the chaos of our time and that's what will constitute our cultural space" (Morgan 448). The text plays with the image of the monster when Nicephore explains that people had an irrational hatred towards these hybridized "monsters" because "leur existence met à mal la raison, la logique, le bon sens, et rares sont ceux qui peuvent le supporter" (35). At the same time, his duty is to track and destroy those monsters who have gotten out of control. In one particularly poignant scene, Apollon says "je ne suis pas un monstre" while the look we see Nicephore give him is a silent confirmation that as a hybrid creature himself, Apollon may also in fact be qualified as a "monster."

In the same interview with Janice Morgan, Chamoiseau says: "Our communities begin— not under the form of a genesis that opens up to a founding myth, a History—but under the form of a di-genesis, that is to say that the tale opens and creates within diversity. […] So there is no absolute—not linguistically, not racially, not culturally, not historically; we are in an extreme relativisation of traditions, a chaos of diversity—that's what characterizes our populations here, not a monolithic story (447). A closer look into one of Ségur's representations of the supernatural shows how he exemplifies this chaos of diversity. One double-page spread almost swallows up the small textual explanation of the how and the why of what we are seeing (*Encyclomerveille* 20-21). The superposing of infinite worlds and realities stacks up demons, ghoulish mutants, stately and comical figures, some reminiscent of a certain time period (the Spartan warrior, Hellboy and Wall-E) and others timeless or mythical like the mermaid or the

fairy. There is an Egyptian sarcophagus, a robot, an enslaved person, a Nordic Viking and many animal hybrids. If we look more closely at seemingly the most realistic portrayal of the woman in the bottom left foreground, we notice that her leg seamlessly transitions into a hoof and she is carrying an iPod, an anachronistic object against her dress and mode of transportation. All are influences on the world; they have just been removed from their specific places and times. Glissant suggests that because the Caribbean is caught between both an "impossible-to-know" beginning and (as with all of humanity) an "impossible-to-conceive" end, it should reclaim and value itself as a space of natural uncertainty. Instead of inventing a Genesis story, or a "Philosophy of History," Glissant highlights communities who accepted to live within this suspension "entre deux infinis ou deux inconnaissables, sans Genèse ni Fin qui protègent." Wrongly labeled "primitive" or "magical," they in fact represent his theory of the Tout-Monde: "Tous les ici soudains et tous les temps et les espaces de tous les peuples du monde" (*Cohée* 236).

Returning briefly to the term "Encyclomerveille" with decoloniality and Relation in mind, we can perhaps nuance Wendy Knepper's designation of the title as a "challenge [to] Enlightenment conceptions of attaining knowledge through a rationalized structure" (191). Decolonial aesthesis also identifies the Enlightenment specifically in its critique of European aesthetics. In an interview on aesthesis, Mignolo says, "we emphasized 'sensing, thinking and doing,' breaking away from the European eighteenth-century distinction and hierarchy between 'knowing, rationality' and 'sensing, emotions'" (Diallo). However, this "breaking away" is never fully achieved, as that would create an undesired dialectical opposition. Rather, we are to remain "entangled" with modernity, but "no longer 'applying' European-born categories to 'understand' colonial legacies." For Mignolo, the achievement of decolonial studies is its conversion of

Europe into "a domain of analysis rather than a provider of 'cultural and epistemic resources'" (Diallo). I see *Encyclomerveille* as participating in this exploration, incorporating influences from European traditions as well as Caribbean ones. In fact, it resonates quite well with the first definition of the term "encyclopédie" in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, whose goal is to "rassembler les connoissances éparses sur la surface de la terre ; d'en exposer le système général aux hommes avec qui nous vivons, et de le transmettre aux hommes qui viendront après nous ; afin que les travaux des siècles passé n'aient pas été des travaux inutiles pour les siècles qui succèderont" (*Encyclopédie*). At their initial intentions of representing heterogeneous totality, the two may be less oppositional than initially assumed.

Chamoiseau sees a certain dialogic quality to all of his works, regardless of their formal elements: "même si on n'a pas le nom des personnages, les dialogues et les réponses, si l'on regarde bien il y a toujours quelqu'un qui répond à quelqu'un" (Plumecocq 133). In examining his collaborations in the graphic novel realm, this philosophy functions on two levels. It is the perfect medium to accommodate his penchant for infusing orality into his works. Commonly known as the "marqueur de paroles," he has always put a particular emphasis on orality, manipulating the written word and making room in his works for other sounds and sensations to inhabit its lines. But we can also identify a metaliterary dialogue occurring through the choice of this medium, itself so enmeshed within a Western canon, in order to respond to what Walter Mignolo will refer to as the "global designs" of History and Time. The authors and illustrators of these works use this tension to both mythologize and disturb the trope of the national hero in the context of an Antillean "non-history." Chamoiseau, as someone who has worked in a wide-range of mediums, avowed he initially gravitated to painting, but it was too expensive a passion to

maintain when all writing required was pen and paper. His remains, though, self-avowedly "une écriture d'image," a synthesis that he admits matches his linguistic manipulations: "en plus la langue créole fonctionne comme ça et le contour créole aussi" (Plumecocq 131). Upon examining his engagement with the *bande dessinée* genre, we can say that his "écriture avec / à côté de l'image" deserves wider critical attention as well.[11]

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[11]Outside the graphic novel, see *Le papillon et la lumière* (2011), illustrated by Philippe Rey; *Tracées de mélancolies* (1999) with photographer, Jean-Luc de Laguarigue; *Les bois sacrés d'Hélénon: Textes de Patrick Chamoiseau et Dominique Berthet* (2002, Exposition at Musée Dapper); *Laouchez : Traces caraïbes* (1998).

CHAPTER 3: A SOLI(D/T)ARY COLLABORATION: EXPERIENCING FRANKÉTIENNE'S SCHIZO*PHO*NIA

Délit de lire au nid de l'œil
défi d'écrire l'image qui fugue
magie de dire l'imaginaire
l'écho du corps aux cris des nerfs.

Ma drogue obscure jusqu'à la lie
mon paradis grandiose et fou
je chevauche mon délire tout nu
la génie de mes loas furieux.

- Frankétienne, *L'Oiseau schizophone*[1]

Born in 1936 in Ravine Sèche, Frankétienne is a composition of opposing forces that extend from his own identity into his literary and artistic practice. He often describes himself as fundamentally both divided and divisive. The child of the rape of his 13-year old mother by a 63-year-old wealthy white American railroad owner, growing up "la peau blanche, avec une tête de nègre" (Larrayadieu 58), Frankétienne fit in nowhere. He approaches artistic expression with a similar unclassifiable methodology, labeling himself "as much a painter as […] a writer" (Taleb-Khyar 385). Even the evolution of his name from Franck Étienne to Frankétienne stands as a testament to the level of both fusion and schism present in everything he does. His work is both destructive and creative; in defying the confines of literary genre, the divisions among languages,

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[1]*L'Oiseau schizophone,* 203.

the privileged role of the author, he creates a more open literature that requires the participation of the reader in such an active way that it blurs the boundary between producer and consumer.[2]

Patrick Chamoiseau's concept of an "écriture d'image" in the previous chapter takes on new dimensions in Frankétienne's self-described "écriture graphique." Both terms reference an infusion of the visual into the textual; but, whereas Chamoiseau's term speaks to an ekphratic process, Frankétienne's "écriture graphique" pushes towards an inverted model where text fractures into image and sound. *L'Oiseau Schizophone* (1993) is the first text into which the Haitian artist inserts his own Indian ink drawings. It also marks a turn to an aesthetics of excess, as the first of several massive tomes surpassing eight hundred pages each, including *Miraculeuse* (2005) and *Galaxie Chaos-Babel* (2006). This surge of production evolved out of an already prolific publication record. Over his decades-long career, Frankétienne has authored over 60 texts and countless paintings, of which there exists no official inventory.[3] Of all the works studied in this dissertation, Frankétienne's deal the most explicitly with the challenge of producing a literature in motion, as well as with the reader's active participation in authorship.

Along with Jean-Claude Fignolé and René Philoctète, Frankétienne enacts a Spiralist aesthetic: an approach to literary creation that stretches the traditional confines of language and questions any and all representational systems. There is no Spiralist manifesto; in fact, any concretization or regulation would run counter to Spiralist thinking. The main tenets of the movement are enacted through praxis and often expounded upon in interviews, or in the many metacommentaries that dot the landscape of Frankétienne's texts. Frankétienne argues that

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[2]As discussed in the introduction, this destructive/creative force is reflected in *Ultravocal*'s discussion of poetic form as a "lieu de rencontres et de ruptures fécondes. […] quelque chose de neuf naitra de ce chaos" (317).

[3]Estimated at over 1000 more than a decade ago by Jean Jonassaint in "Beyond Painting or Writing: Frankétienne's Poetic Quest."

Spiralism tackles the temporal and spatial constraints that arise when moving from reality to its expression in art:

> C'est une méthode d'approche pour essayer de saisir la réalité qui est toujours en mouvement. Le problème fondamental de l'artiste est celui-ci : essayer de capter une réalité, transmettre cette réalité, tout en gardant les lignes de force, de manière que ce réel transmis sur le plan littéraire ne soit pas une chose figée, une chose morte. C'est là le miracle de l'art : essayer de capter le réel sans le tuer. Capter : c'est saisir, c'est immobiliser. Il s'agit d'appréhender sans étouffer. […] et cela, à la longue, reproduit le mouvement de la spirale. (Fleischmann 23)

The spiral manifests in so many naturally occurring phenomena, from hurricanes down to plant life and DNA strands. It is the direction that the loosely defined narratives take in a Spiralist work, a combination of turns and near-returns, never to the same exact point. Spiralism is not limited to textual productions; images, or combinations of image and text, can also be spirals, according to Frankétienne. The above quotation does not speak of replicating the *image* of the spiral, but rather its movement: the way our minds infuse the otherwise static image of a spiral with a swirling, outwardly expanding motion. This movement appears on several different strata of Frankétienne's work. On the level of narration, past, present, and future become signifiers emptied of their referents, making the present "the only functional temporality," as Kaiama Glover puts it ("Showing" 103). Unlike Chamoiseau's attempts to represent a Martinique's (non)history described in the last chapter, Frankétienne's works—while they do occasionally reference certain temporal markers—do not embroil themselves in the categorization of history as such (or its negation). He describes time as "une référentielle subjective," as an abstraction that the human mind distorts in order to make sense of something beyond its comprehension: "Ce que, dans nos limites intellectuelles et mentales, nous appelons le temps, se rapporte au déroulement évolutif ou régressif des êtres autour d'un axe flexible, un lieu repérable fixe ou mobile, un espace réel ou imaginaire" (*H'Éros-Chimères* 123). In other words, time follows a

spiral or helix-like movement as opposed to a unidirectional linear progression. The spiral is also present as an "enchevêtrement de formes et de genres" (Bona) that combines handwriting, drawing and printed text, as well as poetic verse, prose, theatrical dialogue, and even cinematic elements, as I will argue later.

Readers drive the creative process in Frankétienne's Spiralism. *Ultravocal* begins with an appeal to the reader to complete what it offers up as a "pre-text": a term used to refer to the work as a whole. The first paragraph presents the components of this pre-text:

> Narration. Description. Monologue. Rumeur de voix. Personnages ballottés entre la vie et la mort, dans l'éparpillement du texte. Vatel, condamné à l'errance. Mac Abre, l'incarnation du mal. Le poète, prisonnier de son délire. Et surtout, vous lecteur, complice du jeu terrible de l'écriture ; vous dont la participation conditionne l'existence du livre. (7)

This short introductory passage mirrors what the larger pre-text does by presenting us fragments of forms and characters, one of whom is the reader herself. The responsibility falls to us to bring the work into existence, not simply by reading the lines of text, but through assemblage, reconstruction of the component parts as we see fit. Frankétienne describes a spiral as "une oeuvre ouverte au sens où l'a décrite Umberto Eco" (Chemla "Entretien"). Eco asserts that "every reception of a work of art is both an interpretation and a performance of it, because in every reception the work takes on a fresh perspective of itself" (4). *Ultravocal* puts this claim to the test by refusing even its pagination as a fixed organizational structure determined by the author. Page numbers act merely as a "système de repérage" and should in no way determine the reader's path through the text (8). While the term "pre-text" designates the work-in-progress, we can also read *Ultravocal* as a pretext for something else: a call for upsetting the order of things under the guise of a novel that more or less stays within the traditional boundaries of the book form. Rachel Douglas has noted the more politically explicit additions to the content of

Frankétienne's rewriting of *Ultravocal* to both critique the Duvalier dictatorship and highlight

pockets of resistance with multiple references to "manifestants," "participants" and "militants

actifs" (*Rewriting* 85). Reading the pre-text also on a formal level, we should consider its

practice of making space for a more equal partnership between author and reader as an integral

part of this political resistance.

      Ultravocal may indeed be the pretext for *L'Oiseau schizophone*, in which text and image

placement on the page often gives no clear indications as to the order in which they should be

read. The linguistic, philosophical and systemic resistance of what Frankétienne deems

"schizo*phonia*" is an awareness of this mode and operates as a requisite opening up of the work,

eliciting the reader's participation in drawing connections and making meaning within deliberate

obscurities and lacunae. It is a split, not of the mind, but at the level of language, whereby affect

becomes the utmost priority of language. Words in larger typeface often interrupt paragraphs at

varying angles. Our eye is drawn thus to stitch the larger text pieces together regardless of their

position on the page. Frankétienne's *écriture quantique* in turn promotes a sort of *lecture

quantique*. In trying to piece together syntax, we are often faced with multiple choices. Because

of the placement and similar size of the words "L'écriture comme," "rythme" and "pouvoir"

(110), writing could be like either one, or both at once. Other configurations are even more

disorienting, and the reader is left struggling to assign significance to the angle of the words

alongside their various combinations of definitions.

      The incorporation of drawn elements only serves to amplify the chaotic nature of the text

layout. The thick brush strokes of Indian ink retain the movement of the gesture that made them,

and like many of Frankétienne's paintings, the image remains at the intersection of the figural

and the abstract. The text seems to both frame and emanate from the drawing; one can piece

together some of the fragments into a coherent syntax while still providing a variation of possibilities. The schizophonic page presents us with a number of verb options for what "Le grand bond en avant," does to "les sens indivduels" (806), all of which are amalgamations of ideas or actions that sonically play off one another in a sort of domino effect (*rassouiguait* to *rassounillait*, or *embouledoguait* to *embuldozait*, etc.). The top of the page gives us the clearest directive that seems to be enacted by the rest of the page: "Les excès de la raison minent la Révolution" (806). There are references to repression, revolution, and dictatorial oppression throughout *L'Oiseau schizophone* that act as a collective murmuring of dissent in the background of the work. For any revolution to be enacted, there must be a disassembling of the prevailing power structures, in other words, the logic that has led to the current state of those oppressed. In *L'Oiseau schizophone*, reason lives in the domain of the real and is frequently opposed to the freedom of the dream world, which runs counter to any logical reasoning or adherence to chronology. As Frankétienne writes in *Fleurs d'insomnie*: "Le rêve est incontestablement le premier des Chemins qui conduisent à la liberté" (7). Or again in *Ultravocal*: "La formule clé, c'est le rêve. Vous avez faim, rêvez. Vous sombrez dans le chômage, rêver. Vous voulez survivre, rêvez en paix. Pour combler le vide, rêvez encore" (120). Even if the tone is ironic, the dream world is presented an escape from the suffering of waking life, a space where there are still possibilities in a context where there are few "real" ones left.

The dream is also linked to madness as both are at odds with reason and logic. When the text speaks of the power of artists, poets and philosophers to "remuer les consciences" (78), it is because they can infuse dreams and words in a manner that borders on the insane. "Je connais l'un d'eux […] On dit souvent de lui qu'il est un fou perdu, un maniaque délirant qui jongle avec les rêves et les mots. Lui-même et son image" (78). This connection to the potential freedom of

both dreams and psychosis recalls a surrealist aesthetic that also appears in the constant

questioning of subjectivity, played out through the recurrent image of the mirror as a reflection

of an "other" self.[4] The analysis of schizophrenic artists by psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn attracted

the attention of Breton and other Surrealists. One case study of particular interest to this chapter

would be the sketches of Heinrich Welz, who believed them to be not representations of his

thoughts, but direct extractions (Prinzhorn 126-7). While Frankétienne has credited the

Surrealists of the early 20th century as one of his many sources of inspiration, I am less interested

in tracing any sort of creative genealogy than in highlighting these resonances that stem from a

similar interest in psychosis and the power of schizophrenic art. The turn toward the

subconscious, the neurodivergent, the illogical, affords artists certain possibilities of resistance

when working within an established constraint, like the one of literature or language itself.[5]

This chapter draws connections between excess, mental illness, and the particular

imaging of text in *L'Oiseau schizophone* as attempts to diminish the primacy of the author and

the interpretative process that paradoxically end up disallowing those very goals in many ways.

Like in other image-text collaborations highlighted in this dissertation, the particular encounter

of pictorial and graphic form works to challenge the reader/viewer's field of perception and how

we process stimuli and information. The "open work" style, including the lack of any one

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[4] Michael Dash addresses the circulation of Surrealism in the Caribbean and its subsequent transformations in "Le Je de l'autre: Surrealist Ethnographers and the Francophone Caribbean." *L'Esprit Créateur*, Vol. 47, No. 1, Spring 2007, pp. 84-95. "In their encounters with other non-European cultures, the other could either be positioned as a redemptive force, outside of the process of history, or, on the other hand, exoticism would yield to the everyday and otherness would become a mirror for self-exploration […] The Caribbean has never been an uncontaminated elsewhere but l'Outre-Occident, deeply marked by Europe's past colonial adventures and present political crises" (86).

[5] In speaking specifically of affordances, I'm drawing on Caroline Levine's use of the term in *Forms*: "Affordances point us both to what all forms are capable of—to the range of uses each could be put to […]—and also to their limits, the restrictions intrinsic to particular materials and organizing principles" (10).

methodology of perception, allows for what Walter Mignolo will refer to as possible "options,"

not only for participatory reading practices, but also for reconceptualizing ways of being in the

world.[6] Instead of a collaboration between artist and author as in the previous chapters, *L'Oiseau*

schizophone (1993) and the subsequent *H'Éros-Chimères* (2002) image-text "spirals" are

expressions of an *intra*-collaborative process. While they still resist an individualistic conception

of authorship, they nevertheless highlight what an isolating process artistic creation can be,

especially within the Haitian context. This tension can be represented by the term "*soli(d/t)aire*,"

my truncated representation of an idea that underpins both Frankétienne's and Glissant's

thinking.[7] Both explore the phonic similitude of *solitaire* and *solidaire* as contrasting yet

complimentary constructs of the Caribbean artist: a duality reminiscent of Kamau Brathwaite's

well-known reminder that "the unity is submarine" (64), which represents a unique Caribbean

ontology through the metaphor of the archipelago.[8] To this end, Philippe Bernard will say that

Frankétienne is "un homme seul. C'est un homme pleinement conscient de sa solitude qu'il crie

et qu'il écrit. Son engagement dans le combat est pourtant total" (272). The tension between

these two modes manifests as a schizophrenic praxis: multiple voices and medias all emanating

from one individual (split into both artist and author). The sheer act of being a writer in Haiti is

"une activité schizophrénique" for Frankétienne, "dans un pays sans maison d'édition, où vendre

cent exemplaires d'un livre fait de vous un auteur de best-seller" (Aubel 59). The collaboration

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[6]For a discussion of decolonial options, see Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, "Decolonial options and artistic/aestheSic entanglements: An interview with Walter Mignolo," *Decolonialization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2014, pp. 196-212.

[7]In Glissant's case, Valérie Loichot traces the origins of the refrain "Solidaire et solitaire" to his affinity for Albert Camus (563). In Camus' short story "Jonas ou l'artiste au travail," Jonas struggles to find the right balance between these two poles to nurture his artistic creation, eventually painting a word on a canvas that cannot be definitively identified as either "solitaire" or "solidaire."

[8]Like Frankétienne, Brathwaite has also experimented with pangeneric works, a confluence Rachel Douglas briefly addresses in *Frankétienne and Rewriting: A Work in Progress*.

between reader and author in the creation of the work is however confronted by Frankétienne's self-described "megalomania:" an egocentric and at times self-aggrandizing authorship, even as it creates a shifting landscape of subject pronouns that challenges the privileged position of any one narrator. Frankétienne's schizophonic works operate within this split space of the *soli(d/t)aire*: the realities of being at once geographically, psychologically and academically isolated *and* also inextricably fused with the reader and with the world.

The image is central to the manifestation of the *soli(d/t)aire*. With the increase in Frankétienne's reliance on images comes an increase in the disjointed nature of text, the schizophonic splitting of sign from referent, and therefore the participatory work necessary from the reader to experiment with the multiple ways of piecing together and making meaning. *Mûr à crever* and *Ultravocal* set the foundation for the fullest implementation of such experimentation in *L'Oiseau schizophone*, which imitates a cinematic-like movement in textual form. In it, Frankétienne presents his idea of *psykinérama*: a way spark thought more directly that I argue we can understand as a manifestation of Gilles Deleuze's time-image. Like the time-image, Frankétienne's project in *L'Oiseau schizophone* is not to communicate a message or represent X using Y, but to think what may lie outside thought. As D.N. Rodowick explains, "if there is an 'original will to art' in the time-image, it is based neither on communicating with nor informing the spectator. Rather, the time-image puts us in contact with what it closer to us and yet most distant—thought that is still outside of us, and so remains intransmissible" (188). There is an emphasis on "thought as experimentation" (195) in the time-image as in the psykinérama structure. It is this experimental form that makes *L'Oiseau schizophone* in particular both the most liberated and the most quarantined.

The Primacy of the Visual in Spiralism

For Frankétienne, form is inseparable from content: "Je n'ai jamais cru à cette division artificielle entre le fond et la forme" (Fleischmann 25). His careful attention to the arrangement of paragraph breaks and bolded or italicized passages highlights the visual elements in solely textual works. Kaiama Glover has noted that the term "Spiralism" privileges aesthetics, as opposed to other Caribbean literary movements like *antillanité*, *créolité* or Négritude that foreground an "ethnic origin or sociopolitical agenda" (*Haiti* 8) in their names. She is quick to assert that this does not mean Spiralism divests itself of socio-political concerns, nor does it show a disinterest in aesthetics within the other movements, but that this emphasis on the aesthetic nevertheless distances Spiralism from theory. In other words, because Spiralism does not bear upon transmitting a preexistent message from writer to reader, the traditional role of literary critic as interpreter is disrupted at the very heart of the practice. As Glover argues, an "unquestioning acceptance—expectation—of theory as paradigm" (22), one that legitimizes works as valuable, is indeed problematic, especially as it determines which works circulate more widely and garner acclaim from the literary community. Just because Spiralism does not coalesce into an easily definable concept, or perhaps tries to escape the organizational structure of the paradigm altogether, it is nonetheless a valid topic of study. While Glover's focus is on the Spiralists' disruption of the divide between individual and community through the way they (un)develop their characters, the present study focuses on the visual aesthetics of Spiralism. I contend that the growing infusion of graphic elements and attention to form in Frankétienne's spiral works both attest to the rejection of the "theoretical elucidation" Glover outlines and act as an alternative way to theorize: to align theory, experiment and experience.

While Frankétienne's first and most widely known work, *Mûr à crever* (1968), contains references to Spiralist practice and to the goal of creating a "Genre Total où sont mariés harmonieusement la description romanesque, le souffre poétique, l'effet théâtral, les récits, les contes, les esquisses autobiographiques, la fiction…" (13), the list of publications in the front matter of the 1995 edition labels it a "novel," while other later works like *L'Oiseau schizophone*, *Fleurs d'insomnie* and *Ultravocal* are "*spirales*." This transition from novel to spiral seems to stem from an increased reliance on the visual experience of the work, and therefore on the participatory collaboration from the reader rather than the communicative nature of the language itself. On one level, *Mûr à Crever* acts as an explanation of the main tenets of Spiralism. It follows Raynaud and his alter ego, Paulin, who is in search of a new style of writing. There is a depth of visual imagery evoked in the text—Glover refers to it as a "verbal painting" (*Ready*)— but it remains more expository than experiential. While it begins with a vivid description of language as weather, the tone is still rooted in speech: "Chaque jour, j'emploie le dialecte des cyclones fous. Je dis la folie des vents contraires" (15); "A force de vouloir dire, je ne suis devenu qu'une bouche hurlante. […] Tout simplement j'écris. Parce qu'il le faut. Parce que j'étouffe" (17). Suffocating, saying and screaming are tied to the vocal chords, to the breath in auditory expression that is also evoked by the winds of stormy language, all of which are also connected to the act of writing. Compared to the chaotic disconnection of *L'Oiseau schizophone*, *Mûr*'s complete sentences and more narrative-like prose contain less impetus for the reader to intervene in the same active way as in future "spirals."

The first designated "spiral," *Ultravocal,* directly follows the publication of *Mûr.* It continues the topos of the search that was present in *Mûr*, but instead of directly addressing genre and form, its contents shift inward to a more psychologically driven search. The setting: a

putrefied Port-au-Prince rebaptized as Vilasaq, in which the characters are less defined and the providence of the narrative voice even more ambiguous. While it contains no images, it was the spark—or rather the last ember of creative fire—that provoked Frankétienne to switch from writing to painting. Writing it in the wake of François Duvalier's death when there was no way of knowing the fate of Haiti under Jean-Claude Duvalier, Frankétienne admits *Ultravocal* was the work that "marked [him] the most" and left him "exhausted" (Jonassaint "Beyond" 145). In the face of this tumultuous uncertainty, but also "full of illusions," he was "compelled to create": "[T]he only self-knowledge I have […] is that I am fundamentally a creator" (145). He credits the writing process itself for this transition: "[*Ultravocal*'s] musicality and the unusual texture of its images was to awake undoubtedly the painter in me" (Taleb-Khyar 385). In the same way Patrick Chamoiseau will find in the form of the *bande dessinée* a space that felt less restrictive, allowing him to begin to experiment writing in both Creole and French, Frankétienne distances himself from the toxic connection he saw between dictatorship and language. The necessity of writing, or of crying out, in *Mûr à crever* becomes one of creating and focus on the process in *Ultravocal*. This turn away from writing marks a growing wariness of political rhetoric: a desire to find new ways of expression and communication through the image that will accelerate in *L'Oiseau schizophone*. Text transforms from a map key, organizing quadrants into a larger meaning, to a chemist set, providing the tools for experimentation: a sensorial experience that has just as much to do with aural and visual markers as with linguistic signs and their referents.

With titles that specifically address sound, it would seem that both *Ultravocal* and *L'Oiseau schizophone* focus on the aural over the visual. Frankétienne often invents new words based on derivations of the sound of the "stem" word ("gombouline" from the surrounding words "gombo" and "glycérine" or "vivarine"), or strings together phonically similar words and

phrases.[9] He has nevertheless refrained from championing orality over writing in the same way other Caribbean writers position oral culture as a resistance to the rigidity of the colonizer's language. Rachel Douglas attributes this reluctance to Frankétienne's memory of the Duvalierist dictatorship: "Frankétienne has suggested that his refusal to celebrate orality is a rejection of the dictatorship's appropriation and 'folklorization' of the oral story-telling figure the 'Griot,' after whom François Duvalier's literary and scientific movement Les Griots was named" (*Rewriting* 18). While sound is an integral component to how Frankétienne uses language, it is not enough on its own. As the titles also suggest, it needs to be disassembled (*Schizo-*) or surpassed (*ultra-*), as this passage shows demonstrates:

> Je compte sur ma voix pour recréer les villes détruites, les grottes effondrées, les chansons tues, les volcans ensevelis, les cris du métal dans l'eau, les bouches de la chair sous les encombrements du temps et les boucles des cyclones, le tournoiement des hanches, l'élan de nos jambes, la fièvre mixte des lèvres, la substance de l'amour. Je compte même aller *au-delà et en deçà* de ma voix. O interminable, épuisant, époustouflante, cette aventure vers l'inconnue, telle ma course vers moi par mes corridors et par mes trous innombrables pour échapper à mes tristes démons ou pour les affronter de près. (emphasis added, *Ultravocal* 265)

Evoking "le dialecte des cyclones fous" in *Mûr à crever*, or even a Césairean *cri*, the speaker's voice here is a powerfully restorative tool embedded within an external community of towns, volcanos, cyclones, song, sea and intercourse. But the speaker in *Ultravocal* also has to go beyond his own externalized voice in order to probe the unknown, internal territory of self-exploration. This distinction exposes a soli(d/t)ary existence, the challenge of which will be to maintain the intimacy of internal exploration while being porous to outside forces. It is the same attempt to escape a sort of textual solitary confinement that inevitably threatens any author who

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[9]Alex Lenoble cites an exemplary passage from *L'Oiseau Schizophone* that constructs itself through sonic and etymological connections as well as traditional grammatical syntax (Lenoble 335): "Chrysanthème de cris en fleurs à travers les morpholunes de l'art et la grâlune de l'âme. Elle croit ma crise en t'aime aux glauques récits du vice. Elle croise mon île en rut ma chienne récidiviste. Rienne rive hors de saison, de pure raison, la mort active la dérision que rien n'arrive quand tout arrive en paradoxe" (*L'Oiseau* 8).

commits words to a page. Images—and their relationship to the movement of cinema—will act as this space beyond the voice, beyond language itself, that counteract some of the solitude and stagnancy of writing.

Cinematic Text and Automatic Thought

A substantial portion of *Mûr à crever* is devoted to an intermittent conversation between Paulin and Raynand about the exact nature of the book Paulin is writing, Paulin describes his spiral process in a way that mirrors much of what Frankétienne has expressed in interviews on the subject:

> Ces pages, malgré leur caractère autobiographique, diffèrent d'un journal de vie. Elles ne s'embarrassent d'aucune chronologie. C'est plutôt une sorte de film brouillé. Le cinéma flou de certains événements-clés de ma vie. Dans ces pages, l'essentiel pour moi, c'est de lâcher la bride à mon imagination dans la chevauchée des souvenirs qui, paradoxalement, tiennent à la fois du passé, du présent, et prolongent la vie dans un futur informe. L'écriture spiraliste bouscule le temps et l'espace. C'est une approche esthétique qui tient à la fois de la relativité et de la théorie quantique. (*Mûr* 172)

There are many elements of Spiralism condensed into this brief description, including the amalgam of imagined and autobiographical elements within the narrative and authorial voices. The reference to relativity and quantum theory will reappear again and again in Frankétienne's attempts to describe Spiralism's particular relationship to time and space.[10] What is perhaps most striking, however, is the immediate jump to the visual in the explanation of the text as cinema, and more specifically as a scrambled signal projecting past, present and future.

In many ways, the editing process of film closely resembles that of text. Pieces of the text or film are cut and rearranged from what was originally shot or written to create the final product. However, it is not the editing stage but rather the effect this editing has on our

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[10]For more on Frankétienne and chaos theory, see Mary Cobb Wittrock, "Frankétienne's spirals: chaos theory, minor literature and generic limits," *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2010, pp. 103-29.

experience of time and thought that is the real connection between Frankétienne's Spiralist texts

and cinema. Like the cinematic form, a Spiralist work like *L'Oiseau schizophone* has the practice

of assemblage at its core, the pieces of which cannot be individuated from their whole, even

though the whole appears anything but. I propose we look to the resonances between Gilles

Deleuze's time-image and the type of reading experience Frankétienne's texts strive to create.

The cinematic backbone of Frankétienne's texts is what allows for this jostling of time and

space. Deleuze distinguishes the time-image from the movement-image. There is a mappable

chronology in the movement-image, even if the events are out of sequence; it maintains an

indirect relationship to time. A cause-and-effect paradigm dominates this mode of cinema, as our

brains make logical links and associations between the images presented to us. The time-image,

however, makes time no longer dependent on this logical, causational schema. It is no longer a

sequence, but a series.[11] No longer a representation of time, but time itself: "Time-images have

nothing to do with before and after, with succession. Succession was there from the start as the

law of narration. Time images are not things happening in time, but new forms of coexistence,

ordering, transformation" (Deleuze "Mediators," 283). Time-images present time directly, as

opposed to prompting the viewer to piece together any sort of chronology.

If we tried to plot events in *Mûr à crever* onto a timeline, it would inevitably overlap and

contradict itself, like the image of a Möbius strip often used to visualize Deleuze's time-image.

Paulin is writing a novel that he finally decides to entitle "Mûr à crever." The reader is in a sort

of loop where intradiegetic and extradiegetic personas and actions intersect. Just after the

previously mentioned passage that describes the "cinéma flou" of the Spiralist text, Raynand sits

down to read the pages Paulin has handed him. In this moment we are reading while Raynand

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[11]Rodowick outlines this useful distinction between sequence or succession and series in *Gilles Deleuze's time machine,* pp. 174-9.

reads, wondering if we both could possibly be reading the same words. The description of this act of reading is another gesture towards the cinematic:

> Pendant qu'il lit, des fragments de pensées et d'images émergent. Créent des arabesques. Puis disparaissent. A certains passages, tout un monde intérieur se déploie. Monde presque insaisissable. Cri pur. Vision poétique. […] Il faudrait alors pouvoir utiliser une nouvelle technique d'écriture capable de suivre le déroulement inégal et discontinu du panorama intérieur. Et de piéger les idées concentriques, les faisceaux parallèles ou divergents, les ondes fuyantes. (173)

Once again, form returns to the heart of debate. The references to a new kind of writing, arabesque images, panorama, and even the parallel or divergent rays that evoke the projection of film onto a screen, all reinforce *Mur*'s earlier call for a cinematic text. It is not simply a question of form here, but rather form's relationship to thought that this passage describes: what technique could adequately reproduce ("follow" and "capture," not "represent") the discontinuous fragments of thought that make up this "monde [intérieur] presque insaisissable" of the reading mind. It's this elusive, ineffable space between internal thought and the external world that fascinates Frankétienne's characters, and bridging this divide is the major preoccupations of his works.

One of the clearest moments of this challenge comes on the second page of *L'Oiseau schizophone* by way of a Socratic dialogue between an authorial voice and an inquisitive interlocuter. [12] The author proclaims to have written an "epic work," after which will come the destruction of literature and its replacement by *psykinérama*, what he explains as a sort of mental projection, a manner of creation without the intermediary of language: "le cinéma des rêves en projection concrète. Le cinéma des âmes en connexion directe" (7). The passage speaks of "capacitors" and "transformers" of brain energy that will allow for the "matérialisation

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[12]*H'éros-Chimères* also begins with a reference to cinema: "Alchimie h'érotique des images et des mots au pays des chimères. […] Et cinéma plus libre que mes gestes. […] Ni références a priori ni préférences métaphoriques sur les ailes du hasard l'envoûtant cinéma d'un chaos fabuleux" (7).

automatique des éléments imaginaires" (OS 7). Deleuze claims it is the autonomous movement of the cinematic image that shocks the brain into thought: "It is only when movement becomes automatic that the artistic essence of the image is realized: producing a shock to thought, communicating vibrations to the cortex, touching the nervous and cerebral system directly" (*Cinema 2* 156). While neither text nor pictorial image could be in motion the same way as the cinematic image, *L'Oiseau schizophone* claims to be the prerequisite stepping stone between literature and this new form for creation. A sense of immediacy characterizes both descriptions. Each points to a direct, more sensory-based connection that forgoes the mediator of language with its signifiers and signifieds.

The revolutionary element of the time-image is its capacity to move beyond thought structured as a representational system. Film scholar Ils Huygens explains the power of the time-image as one that allows for the realization of true difference: "For Deleuze this [representational] image of thought is dogmatic because it can only represent us what we already know. It does not allow to think the unthinkable, what has not been thought, what falls outside what we already know." Cinema exposes the "impower" or the *impouvoir* of thought, because at the same time as it shocks us to thought, that shock also provokes a recognition of the other side of the coin, the fact that we are not thinking. Deleuze ascribes utmost importance to this "powerlessness at the heart of thought" (*Cinema 2* 166) because of its potential to recreate a sense of belief within us. In the absence of thought, we must turn to *belief* in the unthinkable and the impossible. This is the rather utopic side of the time-image because it is a possibility of becoming other but without the need for a different world. As Rodowick asserts: "Belief is no longer belief in a transcendent world, or in a transformed world, but a belief in *this* world and *its*

powers of transformation" (192). The unthinkable of thought creates the same possibilities as, for example, the impossibility at the core of minor literature.[13]

In questioning the limits of what language can transmit, Frankétienne is a "creator": "someone who creates his own impossibilities, and thereby creates possibilities" (Deleuze "Mediators" 292). Instead of directly privileging the power of the word, like Césaire's "arme miraculeuse," Frankétienne describes *L'Oiseau schizophone* as a sort of experiment of the impower of the word. Living through the doublespeak of Duvalier dictatorship and recognizing the ongoing manipulated rhetoric within the post-Duvalier *dechoukaj* altered Frankétienne's relationship to language: "les mots avaient perdu leur sens. La possible impuissance de la parole a été ma préoccupation principale lors de l'écriture de [*L'Oiseau schizophone*]" (Chemla et Pujol 117). From the powerlessness of the word will come the possibility of the word otherwise, outside the connotations it had under Duvalier:

> Je reste convaincu qu'un texte littéraire est une petite étincelle qui permet de retrouver l'Autre, pas forcément le voisin, mais un autre quelconque sur la surface de la terre. C'est pour cela que je n'ai d'autre choix que me taire ou continuer sur la voie de la perversion des mots. Si d'autres sont capables de tuer, eh bien laissez-moi massacrer les mots. (117)

Paradoxically, it is by rendering words powerless that Frankétienne's works achieve their power to facilitate an encounter with the Other. This connection is what Frankétienne refers to as his "utopia" (117). *L'Oiseau schizophone* searches for what literature could become once words are stripped of their power to signify, or rather, when that signification becomes a more intimate experience between reader and author. It remains in the creative space of the experiment, of the possible-but-not-yet-realized. Juxtaposing this utopia against the violence of the terms *tuer* and *massacrer* invokes a desire not for an equally violent revenge, but for a shift in the structures that

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[13]Creation, for Deleuze, is "the tracing of a path between impossibilities… Kafka explained how it was impossible for a Jewish writer to speak German, impossible for him to speak Czech and impossible for him not to speak" (Deleuze "Mediators" 292).

created the violence in the first place. While the context of the Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti is vastly different from the post-World War II reality that acts as a backdrop for Deleuze's *Cinema 2*, the violence of systems of power and the rationalization behind them act as a catalyst to look for another way of thinking. For both Frankétienne and Deleuze, this kind of upheaval in political and social life causes a fissure in the human imaginary, in the way concepts are ordered and are assigned meaning.

Superimposing genres to examine something like the cinematography of the Spiralist text recalls what Caroline Levine refers to as the affordances of form. What are the capabilities and limits of a given form and is it possible to interlace forms in some way? If we are to consider *L'Oiseau schizophone* as a step towards this *psykinérama*, this "cinéma concret des faisceaux vibratoires émis par de puissants projecteurs cérébraux" (7), we should approach it as another way of doing "literature" that necessitates another method of readership as well. In fusing elements of the way cinema operates onto a text, we could read this work differently in a way that escapes the more individualist qualities associated with the literary form. We could see it operating not at the level of interpretation, but on the level of thought and philosophy itself. I do not mean that *L'Oiseau schizophone* is trying to represent or recreate thought on the page, but that we are to abandon our tradition role of reader in search of meaning. In experiencing the book, we are practicing a new way of thought. I propose that Frankétienne is gesturing towards this same practice when he refers to the possibility of approaching his text like we would a painting: a demand "schizophonia" places on the reader and a subject I will return to in more detail later in the chapter. Frankétienne's schizophonic texts push language to its limits, to a point where they evolve into images. It is in this transcendental space where they can begin to function outside of representation to enact the type of cinema Deleuze describes. When

Frankétienne rewrites *L'Oiseau schizophone* as a series of eight volumes entitled *Les Métamorphoses de l'oiseau schizophone*, he will back down from this particular experiment, streamlining the typography and alignment as well as removing all 99 drawings. It is perhaps for this reason that he also omits the introduction of *psykinérama* from the first volume all together. There is a singularity of this "epic work" that has the text-(moving) image relationship at its core.

I am by no means the first to drawn connections between Frankétienne and Deleuze. For Kaiama Glover, even as many of Frankétienne's characters are "bodies without organs," they should not be "entirely recuperated by overly enthusiastic, postmodern theoretical agendas" (97). On a formal level, Alex Lenoble, argues that Frankétienne resembles Louis Wolfson, the schizophrenic case study in Deleuze's *Critical and Clinical,* in the way the two manipulate language. However, I argue these connections extend to and are enhanced by the idea of cinema. Instead of creating a new language, as Lenoble argues, to "regain mastery over language even if it meant giving up on articulation and rational meaning" (332), Frankétienne's schizophonia works from the impower of language to posit something other than language in its wake. This something other is not a defined being, but rather is found in the realm of the possible, the utopic, the becoming. Mary Cobb Wittrock examines Spiralism as minor literature, but one that is functional on the level of the *énoncé*, rather than on one of language, as in Deleuze and Guattari's minor schizophrenic language.[14] While I agree with Wittrock that there is a "disequilibrium" created by the jostling of genres that "allows the limits on language to be stretched" (110), I think we should also look outside of schizophrenic language to include

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[14]According to Wittrock, Frankétienne does not use language as a "power source": "Schizophony represents the 'split voice' which operates at the utterance level, on the *énoncé*, and therefore acting at the core of communication. Since Frankétienne expresses schizophony in terms of alliterations, neologisms, rhymes and echoes, these elements of writing and in essence schizophony can be considered rhizomatic and fractalized" (108).

schizophrenia's effects on intersubjectivity and apophenia (the tendency to find meaning in unrelated things). If we expand the study of what Lenoble calls the "exploitation" of schizophrenia to areas beyond linguistics, we will find other schizophrenic symptoms that work to deconstruct normative assumptions about representation, literature and the dialogue between author and reader. Amy Herzog argues that Deleuze's *Cinéma* is a call to action for artists to "create works that transcend the representational, that explore the interstices between memory and perception, that approach what we might call a pure image of time, an image of thought" ("Images" np). While Frankétienne may not be taking up anyone's call to action but his own, his works are undoubtedly participating in a similar initiative.

Schizophrenia as Metaphor

Frantz Fanon argued in *Peau noire, masques blancs* that in the case of Black mental health, neurosis stemmed from societal factors instead of familial ones as in traditional psychoanalysis. The Antillean lived in a white world of media representation and this exclusion extended as far as psychoanalysis itself: "ni Freud, ni Adler, ni même le cosmique Jung n'ont pensé aux Noirs, dans le cours de leurs recherches" (123). This neglect meant presentation and diagnosis in non-white patients could look very different: "Il serait intéressant d'envisager une description de la schizophrénie venue par une conscience noire, — si tant est que cette sorte de trouble se retrouve là-bas" (125). However, within Caribbean literary discourse, schizophrenia is regularly used as a metaphor for a writing practice that is fundamentally split between the specificities of the island and the unescapable connection to the French (neo)colonial power, a schism that often manifests in relation to language. Considering schizophrenic patients also often cite the feeling of being "colonized or obliterated" by others (qtd. in Pinekos 197), the prevalence of the metaphor within a colonial context is understandable. For Patrick Chamoiseau,

juggling Creole and French is "a bit schizophrenic" (Taylor 132). In an interview on Glissant's

use of the term "solitaire et solidaire," the author describes himself as "assez schizophrène,"

working both with his Antillean compatriots as well as poets in France who were mostly

unknown in the Caribbean (Artières 14). Philosopher of language Valentina Cardella posits that

both cognitive and phenomenological approaches to schizophrenia miss the centrality of

language in its development: "research on schizophrenic language should start from the premise

that schizophrenia is under some respects a disease of language, in the sense that it finds in

language its natural fuel, something that feeds the disorder itself" (80). The fact that

schizophrenia affects—and perhaps is also driven by—language production inextricably

connects it to writing. Text from Frankétienne's *H'éros-Chimères*, which frames a floating, dark

bust whose eyes look straight forward, confirms the solitary nature of writing that is also so

inextricably linked to this schizophrenic condition: "J'ai rencontré de nombreux fous originaux.

Ils écrivent aiment lisent et meurent de solitude. Perdus et foudroyés dans L'expérience créatrice

du vide et de la mort. La mort-clown Le grand rêve d'Ailleurs. Le plus grand écrivain est peut-

être un vieux fou solitaire que personne ne lit" (280). This kind of solitude derives from an

understanding of schizophrenics as outsiders or outliers. One of the early descriptions of

schizophrenic patients referenced their contradictory nature in relation to the "norm": "The

schizophrenic wants to be against, the schizophrenic is always […] if not anti-social—at least

anti-traditionalist, anti-conventionalist" (qtd. in Stanghellini "Values" 133).[15] Even if the early

attributions of the patient's "will" to be different were misplaced, the implications for the

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[15]Original citation in J. Berze and H.W. Gruhle, *Psychologie der Schizophrenie*, Springer, 1929, p. 151. This definition comes only nine years after the term "schizophrenia" was coined.

metaphoric use in the context of an outsider, anti-establishment writer torn between two

conflicting sides of herself have remained.

In *Creative Schizophrenia: The Caribbean Cultural Challenge*, Michael Gilkes addresses

the idea of "cultural schizophrenia" manifest in Franz Fanon, José Martí, and Derek Walcott

among others, as "the most damaging legacy of colonization" because "colonization created in

the native the impulse towards mimicry of the metropole" (2). However, Walcott argued that at

the core of the mimetic drive was language, calling therefore for its reinvention: "The only way

to re-create this language was to share in the torture of its articulation […] by the writer's

making creative use of his schizophrenia" (17). Myriam Moïse defines "creative cultural

schizophrenia" as the ability to "function within and without, inside and outside, in public and in

private, across the physical and the discursive, the selves and the other" (63).

The choice to "use" schizophrenia for other goals marks a difference from a clinical

diagnosis. However, the divide between metaphor and reality is not always so clearly defined

and it is important to acknowledge the history of schizophrenia within the African and Afro-

Caribbean diaspora. Fanon has been fundamental in bridging the psychiatric and the literary in

considering the real psychological consequences of colonialism. As Camille Rodcis notes, for

Fanon "colonialism had a direct psychic effect. It could literally render someone mad by

hijacking their person, their being, and their sense of self" (304). Jonathan Metzl's

groundbreaking case study of a Michigan psychiatric hospital shed light on the institutional

racism of the psychiatric practice when he uncovered the staggering correlation of rising

schizophrenia diagnoses in men of color and the acceleration of the Civil Rights movement.[16]

This trend continues to exist, evidenced by a 2017 meta-analysis of racial disparity in

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[16]See Jonathan Metzl, *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease*, Beacon, 2011.

schizophrenia diagnoses revealed that Black patients in the United States (those of African

American, African or Afro-Caribbean origin) were diagnosed 2.4 times more often than their

white counterparts (Olbert et al.). The disproportion was even higher in areas with a lower ethnic

minority population, where such a population is prone to feeling more isolated (111). Other

studies have noted rates of schizophrenia diagnoses as much as nine times higher among first-

and second-generation Afro-Caribbean immigrants in England (Eliacin 466). The real traces of

schizophrenia interfere with usage of the word in a purely figurative sense. The metaphor is

neither glorifying nor trivializing psychosis; it carries with it the weight of these realities.

    While many authors identify writing as the site of schizophrenia, Frankétienne credits

writing as what saved him from it: "La folie d'écrire m'a sauvé du suicide et de la schizophrénie,

et aussi d'un exil intérieur sous Duvalier qui a été terrible pour moi. L'écriture a nourri ma vie et

m'a permis d'assumer ma grande folie. Quand on assume sa folie, on cesse d'être fou"

(Delaporte).[17] While still referred to as the "folie d'écrire," this distinction is important as it

signals both the awareness of and control over madness that turns it from a psychosis to a

creative literary tool, a shift embedded in the term "schizophonia":

> Le schizophrène a son cerveau coupé en deux : il est coupé de la réalité" S'il voit un
> hélico, il dira que c'est un nègre qui vole. Il peut aussi se prendre pour Toussaint
> Louverture ou pour une mouche. Chez lui, l'hypertrophie de l'imaginaire éjecte la réalité
> de son champ mental. Chez le schizophone, c'est différent, la 'schize' se produit au
> niveau des mots. Il s'agit bien sûr d'une schize lucide et créatrice, celle d'un écrivain.
> (Bona)

Because the split is happening on the level of literature rather than inside the mind, it becomes a

more controllable and productive form of madness. At the same time, language itself is the

primary site of schizophrenia, and one of the common traits of the schizophrenic mind is the

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[17]Frankétienne attributes the same relationship to his paintings: "Beaucoup de gens ont toujours cru que j'étais totalement perdu, un fou perdu presque même drogué quand on regarde mes tableaux. Mais c'est ça le paradoxe, c'est une folie que je chevauche, ce n'est pas la folie qui me chevauche" (*Traversée* 32:44-32:56).

inability to distinguish figurative from literal language. Lenoble makes the connection between overlapping senses of "langue" in *L'Oiseau schizophone* as both "language" and "tongue," marking the same kind of concretism schizophrenia produces.[18] If we are considering schizophrenia as a theoretical framework from which to approach Frankétienne's works, this blurred line between metaphorical usage and reality is integral to how schizophonia operates.

Kaima Glover, Dominique Chancé, Alex Lenoble, Mary Cobb Wittrock and Yves Chemla have all addressed the distinction of Frankétienne's neologism "*schizophonie.*" While they acknowledge this practice as a tactic of resistance, they do not agree on its exact relationship to schizophrenia. Is schizophonia a divide only on the level of the voice, or does it retain any ties to the cognitive division at the heart of schizophrenia's etymology? Is language devoid of its power, or does it hold the key to creating a new language imbued with a different relationship to power? If schizophonia eliminates "toute opposition dialectique, entre homme et femme, moi et l'autre, le dictateur et le peuple" in favor of "ambiguity," as Chancé argues (64), then perhaps a complete resolution of the relationship between "schizophrenia" and "schizophonia" is counterproductive to the term itself. Along these lines, I would argue that if psychosis is an exclusionary solitude then schizo*phon*ia will be a soli(d/t)ary relationship with the world and the word, an ontological and linguistic opacity that nevertheless requires engagement and collaboration from the Other. Accepting his schizophrenia, as Frankétienne says, is a way to delink from the modernity/coloniality paradigm. In making creative use of it, he too "challeng[es] the Patriarchal, Old World view of community, of culture and of the creative spirit itself" (Gilkes 4).

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[18]For more on concretism, see: Rossetti, Ileana, et al. "Metaphor Comprehension in Schizophrenic Patients." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 9, 2018, doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00670.

The Schizophrenic Confines of the Mirror

While nothing is strictly linear in Frankétienne's world, there is a progressive exploration of schizophrenic-like perception, starting from *Mûr à crever* and continuing in *Ultravocal*, to arrive at the idea of "schizophonia" in *L'Oiseau Schizophone*. Schizophrenia viewed through a phenomenological lens is a distortion of self-perception, or as Sass and Parnas propose, an "ipseity disturbance" (428). From the Latin *ipse* or "self," they describe typical ipseity as an immediate understanding of experience from a "first person perspective" (428), with the self as the central point. When overinflated, the self can become experienced as an external object. The narrative voice in *Mûr* is split and overlaps with its characters. From a sort of preface set off in italics, we learn that the narrative "I" stands in for three voices: "je parle par la voix de Raynand, par la voix de Paulin, par la mienne propre. Raynand et Paulin ne sont qu'un seul et même personnage. Moi je suis leur voix, tantôt faible, tantôt forte, mais toujours existante. Toujours présente. La voix du tiers-monde écartelé" (Mûr 18). Glover notes this merging of author and character, Frankétienne "subtly refuses to serve as centralizing author-ity" (*Haiti Unbound* 41). Even in doing so, this fusion cannot be a totally unifying claim, as it evokes an already "écartelé" collective. Rather, it is one that speaks to a fractured sense of self and problematizes the idea of individuality. *Ultravocal* presents a similar inflation of ipseity through its manipulation of the narrative voice construct. Instead of serving as a stable focal point for the narration, the first reference we have to a "je" voice in *Ultravocal* is already a nebulous distortion of the self: "M'étendre, dedans, dehors, au-delà, où je cherche l'écho de ma voix dans le vertige, tant est immense le vide" (9). Searching within the echo reflects the spatial displacement of being at once "dedans, dehors," and "au-delà," a distancing from the self that appears again and again

through repetition, doubling or reflection. This "hyperreflexivity," as Sass and Parnas would

describe it, is an externalization of the self (428).

Conversely, undeveloped ipseity does not allow the self to recognize itself as a distinct

and separate entity and therefore blurs the line between self and other.[19] Elizabeth Pienkos calls

this schizophrenic perception a problem of intersubjectivity: "a breakdown of the balance

between sameness and otherness that occurs in the interpersonal encounter" (203). In the world

Frankétienne creates, the mirror becomes the object par excellence of both forms of ipseity

imbalance: its reflection effectively splits the self in two, creating a false other. Frankétienne

often combines visual and auditory imagery, and mirrors thus become the visual equivalent of

echoes, reflecting the same onto itself in what will become an unbearable confinement. Spatial

dichotomies of inside and out and the symmetry of verses reinforce the mirrored effect:

> Tu ne me connaîtras jamais
> j'habite à l'envers de ma peau
> de l'autre côté de moi-même.
> Par le miroir suspendu à ma voix
> par la clef agrafant nos regards
> je te baptise ô mon amour
> et je te possède ! (*Ultravocal* 35)

Again, the designated receiver is unclear, but in this case, the more intimate form "tu"

refers not to the "vous" of the reader, but rather the reflection in the mirror, the "other side" of

the speaker's self. Pienkos gives one example of a person with schizophrenia who avoided

looking people in the eyes "because she would become confused about who was who and

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[19]In addition to hyperreflexivity, Sass and Parnas describe "a diminishment of self-affection or auto-affection—that is, of the sense of basic self-presence, the implicit sense of existing as a vital and self-possessed subject of awareness. (The term affection used here has nothing to do with liking or fondness. "Self-affection" refers to subjectivity affecting itself—that is, manifesting itself to itself in a way that involves no distinction between a subject and an object). […] These complementary distortions are necessarily accompanied by certain kinds of alterations or disturbances of the subject's "grip" or "hold on the conceptual or perceptual field […] that is, of the sharpness or stability with which figures or meanings emerge from and against some kind of background context" (428). This inability to distinguish foreground from background in Frankétienne's works is what reinforces their complexity and frustrates any attempts at creating a reductive "clarity."

whether they were speaking her thoughts or she was speaking theirs, as though they were, perhaps, just one person communicating with herself" (202). In the above passage, even though one side may never fully know the other (*connaître*), there is nevertheless a proprietorship that comes from the power to baptize and possess. At the same time, the dual meaning of *posséder* as both owning and inhabiting someone else reflects the imbalance of ipseity in the schizophrenic subject, who can either be "invaded" by others or conversely, "become" a person or thing nearby (Stanghellini "What" 187).

The mirror suspended from the speaker's voice merges the aural in visual in the same way as this passage, which presents a similar context of frustrated searching:

> Autant de fois que j'allonge le bras, autant de fois que je parle, c'est toujours moi que dans ma rage je saisis derrière le miroir en larmes. S'il m'arrive d'entendre une voix, c'est encore la mienne sans aucun doute. Alors, j'embrasse mon image, mon compagnon de solitude, passant ma main sur le sel de mon visage. […] En outre, aveugle l'œil pour lequel demeure inaccessible l'au-delà de l'eau qui coule en marge de ce qu'on peut voir dans la descente du fleuve. Moi dissident je remonte le courant. C'est le point d'éclatement que cherche le poète. Naissance réelle, la création gît dans l'ailleurs opaque du miroir brisé. (*Ultravocal* 66)[20]

The speaker is trapped within the reflection of his image, confined to his solitude. This confinement is not a productive space because it is already known, possessed. As in the previously cited example of going "au-delà et en deçà de ma voix" (265), it is necessary to venture into the space of the unknown. Breaking the mirror will liberate the self from being trapped in its own reflection, free to explore this "ailleurs opaque," the unknown spaces beyond its own confines.

As published, "open" texts in circulation, works like *Ultravocal* and *L'Oiseau Schizophone* are themselves opaque; they reach out to the public, requiring that the reader

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[20]For an analysis of the connections between mirror, eye and egg imagery in *L'Oiseau Schizophone*, see Dominique Chancé, *Écritures du chaos*, PUV Université Paris 8, Saint-Denis, 2009, pp. 62-67.

participate in their creation, while at the same time thwarting the reader's attempts at comprehension through interpretation. The goal is collaboration, not clarity. Mirrors reappear in *L'Oiseau Schizophone* as signals of trickery (123), oppositional forces, confinement, silence (324), complacency (514), cancer (519), and incessant mimicry (739). Solitude and madness follow as well. Prédilhomme, Philémond's pen name, talks and laughs "tout seul devant son miroir, en mimant le duel des guerriers fous, le ballet de l'empereur akaïkaro avec son ombre" (123). The broken mirror, however, provides for a newness and a promising unknown: "Bribes de mon miroir brisé, mes souvenirs s'effeuillent. J'orchestre mes variantes, mes émotions nouvelles, le futur sans rituel" (293). Breaking the mirror marks a temporal passage, shedding the memories of the past, escaping from the repetition of ritual to arrive in a truly different future.

Externalizing Language

We can view *L'Oiseau Schizophone* as an attempt to break the mirror of repetitive, schizophrenic isolation and move towards an open encounter with difference. Frankétienne's turn to painting and his investigation into the possible impower of language through schizophonia both address the problem of the written word that Paulin lays out in *Mûr à crever*:

> Ce n'est pas que je ne sache quoi dire. C'est la manière de dire qui me tourmente. L'obsession du langage dans le creuset de la solitude. […] Je crois que là réside la différence essentielle entre la peinture, la musique d'un côté, et la littérature de l'autre. Les instruments de base utilisés par le peintre et le musicien, pour véhiculer leur pensée, à savoir les couleurs et les notes, sont extérieurs et permettent un maniement plus facile, tandis que l'écrivain n'a pas une saisie directe sur les mots qui sont tout intérieurs. (116)

Paulin returns to the interrelated nature of form and content. His attempts to find a solution are thwarted by the exact problem he describes: the intense interiority of writing. This solitary act is paradoxical, as writing is also the shared system by which we are able to communicate with a

world outside ourselves. It is the lack of a similar representational system that allows notes and colors to be more easily manipulated.[21] It is the structure of language that blocks the affective immediacy Paulin wants to transmit to his audience. He says he wants to "écrire un roman-thermomètre capable d'indiquer la température des paysages fictifs. Obtenir que le lecteur ressente les variations climatiques et spatio-temporelles" (118). When faced with the hypothesis that the audience wouldn't understand his goals, he rebukes, "A-t-on besoin d'être grand clerc pour savoir si le temps est beau ou mauvais, s'il fait jour ou nuit, s'il fait chaud ou froid ? Tout le monde sait, sans risques d'erreurs, quand il y a de la pluie ou du soleil. Voilà pourquoi théoriquement je n'expliquerai rien à mon lecteur" (118). No codification or interpretive filters are needed to perceive changes in the weather or sun's presence. He wants his writing not to describe, relate, or represent; but to physically and unmistakably affect the reader, like rain on skin. Of course, Paulin has just explained the "jeu et l'enjeu" (118) he purportedly refuses to explain. It is not until *L'Oiseau Schizophone* that he moves from description to practice.

Frankétienne confirms in an interview that the term *schizophone* marks a shift in the reader's engagement and interpretation:

> La schizophonie implique un langage où des mots, des expressions, parfois même des paragraphes entiers exigent du lecteur qu'il aborde l'œuvre au niveau de l'affect, de la vibration vocale. Pourquoi ne pas aborder un texte comme on regarde un tableau, pourquoi toujours être prisonnier de la quête du sens ? (Bona)

If the reader is plagued by the search for meaning within text, Frankétienne finds its formal confines restrictive as well. He often uses the dichotomy of imprisonment and freedom to describe the difference between his writing and painting: "On est beaucoup plus prisonnier de la

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[21]Rita Steblin shows how the certain moods evoked by different musical keys were a contested subject of debate for musicians and critics alike in eighteenth and early nineteenth century Western Europe, many of whom subscribed to the idea that a universal code of key characteristics could be deciphered. See *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, 2nd ed., U of Rochester P, 2002.

sémantique en littérature qu'en peinture" (*Traversée* 36:16-36:22) ; "La peinture s'adressant

beaucoup plus aux sens qu'à l'intelligence, je me sens beaucoup plus libre dans le domaine

pictural" (Jonassaint "D'un exemplaire" 272). Schizophrenic language works against this feeling

of imprisonment, allowing words to become more malleable. This flexibility gives them the

same kind of freedom found in the visual elements of the work. Schizophonia is the resulting

freedom in combining both writing and reading practices.[22]

It is exactly this freedom that proves so dangerous to the tyrannical "zozobiste" regime

that captures his character, Philémond Théophile, at the beginning of *L'Oiseau Schizophone*.

They accuse him of having written a subversive work in order to "déprogrammer le cerveau des

lecteurs" (OS 16): "La liberté totale que vous prônez porte le germe d'un virus foudroyant. Votre

esthétique du chaos absolu et votre théorie sur la lumière des catastrophes conduisent

inéluctablement au sida culturel" (OS 17). The imagery of "le virus schizophonique" (18)

conjures the fear that the psychological is somehow biologically communicable. The fear of

contagion—particularly one with reference to AIDS—is a product of the anxiety around any

kind of meaningful, intimate exchange with the Other, an encounter that risks proving dangerous

to the subject's health. Chemla notes that there is nothing more representative of the extreme

other to Frankétienne than woman ("Iconographie"). As such, many of the drawings in *L'Oiseau

schizophone* depict male and female sexual organs, and coupled bodies that range from clearly

identifiable entangled bodies to a mere impression of corporeal forms. The amalgam of

intertwining body parts in physically impossible forms suggests their inseparability, their fluid

state between self and other that constitutes this "sida culturel." Philémond is ultimately

condemned to quarantine to avoid this risk and to eat the pages of his book, literally

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[22]Valentina Cardella affirms that one of the defining characteristics of schizophrenia has always been their "freedom" in relation to language (22).

(re)internalizing the contagious material. Regardless of whether *L'Oiseau schizophone* is the product, process or precursor of this ingestion, it is another example of the blurred boundary between the metaphorical and literal.

Visually, the addition of these both figural and abstract images alongside the repositioning and resizing of text creates a much more dramatic disruption than in previous works. Frankétienne credits the madness brought about by this "autodévoration" for the disjointed form of *L'Oiseau*: "la folie s'installe […] On ne sait alors plus quand il s'agit du livre, de la biographie de ce séquestré ou des fantasmes qui traversent le lieu de son enfermement. C'est pourquoi dans ce livre, il y a des collages et surtout des dessins" (Berrouet-Oriol 90). It is necessary to break apart the realm of language, as it was language itself that contributed to Philémond's progressive madness. The more it is manipulated and its representational nature jeopardized, the more language becomes externalized like the colors and music notes Paulin dreams of conveying in text. On the linguistic level, Frankétienne similarly dismantles sentences and words and language systems alike. He approaches writing not in order to construct a narrative, but rather to confront each word on its sonic and etymological level: "**une stratégie de lutte**   le combat *des mots*" (*Oiseau* 599). This practice resembles how schizophrenics view language as a powerful force to "struggle against" and "to break into pieces" (Lenoble 334). It is something material that can physically wound. The study of etymology provides a venue for this struggle and serves as an outlet for schizophrenics' "algorithmic conception of sociality": the idea that succeeding in social relationships and communication requires cracking a kind of secret code (Stanghellini "What" 187). Frankétienne came to his own obsession with etymology through his first encounters with the French language. Having only spoken Haitian Creole in his neighborhood, he says he learned French "directement dans les dictionnaires": "j'avalais les

définitions... Ce n'était pas les histoires qui m'intéressaient, c'était l'aventure à travers les mots" (Bona). This education was also laden with the initial chastisement he encountered at school for not knowing French.[23] Perceiving the potential violence of language from a young age turned to seeing a complete lack of meaning behind the political doublespeak of the Duvalier years. These two lived truths of language culminate into what Frankétienne refers to as "l'élément décisif" of his writing: "[le] traitement jubilatoire des mots qui remet en cause les structures d'une société" (Chemla 116).

L'Oiseau schizophone combines French, Kreyòl, neologisms, incomplete words, and occasional English words or phrases. Frankétienne claims that real poetry works "en marge des règles traditionnels [sic] régissant une langue" (Clitandre 25). The inclusion of foreign and invented words adds to the destabilization of the text and requires more attention from the reader, regardless of his or her linguistic background. Like the ambiguity around genre that the text-image work creates, these moments of unexpected language continue to remove constraints of classification or standardization. The comingling of languages reflects the personal genealogy of Frankétienne and also grounds the work in the specificity of Haiti, whose history includes both French colonization and American occupation (1915-1934).[24] The aggregate of languages is but a visible expression of a larger awareness of the totality of language, or what Glissant calls a kind of "vertigo" (*vertige*)": "pas le vertige qui précède l'apocalypse et la chute de Babel. C'est le tremblement initiateur, face à ce possible" (*Poétique* 123). A cornerstone of Glissant's thought

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[23]Frankétienne explores the effects of his French education in *Amours délices et orgues* (2008), the beginning of which recounts an argument he had as a child with a French teacher over these three words that switch from the masculine grammatical gender to the feminine when pluralized. "Amour, délice et orgue au paradis des aubes de l'or" in *L'Oiseau schizophone* (170) is arguably a nod to what was to come.

[24]Frankétienne is also inextricably bound to this period in Haitian history, as he was conceived through the rape of his mother by an American shortly after the occupation. While he grew up speaking Haitian Creole and learned French later, he attests to speaking "Haitian" because Creole can refer to a wide variety of languages and is not a specific enough term for the Haitian experience (Merriam 24).

is this concept of multilingualism incarnate in the image of Babel: not as the ability to speak or interweave multiple languages together, but an imaginary that is unlocked by thinking in solidarity with all the languages of the world: "Je te parle dans ta langue et c'est dans la mienne que je te comprends" (122). This is the kind of frenetic possibility inherent in his conception of the Tower of Babel as a radical equality among all languages that maintains the opacity of the encounter with the Other by removing the transparency a common language would provide.

For Frankétienne, the act of inventing words is a resistance to established power and a catalyst for human connection, a way to recreate the cacophony of Babel. *Ultravocal* again serves as a more explanatory precursor to what is fully put into practice in *L'Oiseau schizophone,* providing the context for the significance of these neologisms: "Alors je parle pour ne plus me sentir seul. J'invente des mots. Et encore des mots de ligature. A contre-foulure. Des mots tambours bambous repus de marronnage" (284). Silence is often compared to solitude and imprisonment, so there is a certain liberatory rebellion (*marronnage*) attached to speech; however, it is not an individualistic act: "Si la parole ne tisse aucun lien entre les hommes, il ne sert à rien de parler" (317). If the word must serve as a link between peoples, invented words will be the necessary splints for a broken language. The way he constructs these new terms closely resembles the identified patterns of schizophrenic language. Some schizophrenics' neologisms are based on certain morphologic standards and serve to fill perceived gaps in the existing language, for example, to express a feeling or idea that has not yet been adequately defined. Other invented or appropriated terms are based on sound and have no intended communicative value or semantics (Cardella 23). Both formats can be found in *L'Oiseau schizophone* and while the former is an individual act that also advances a shared meaning, that does not mean that the latter does not also forge bonds. On the contrary, this second method allows the reader to

experience the text in another way, one that is not regulated by the search for meaning. In our efforts to decipher a composite term we may lose some of the affective immediacy of schizophonia. "Une nouvelle Tour de Babel" (586) is made manifest across three pages of *L'Oiseau* with an unpunctuated string of loosely associated phrases, neologisms and onomatopoeias that build one upon the other, forming a block of text that fills most of each page. Marginalized groups and those with little to no political power like the unemployed, women, children and farmers, form the cacophony of voices all speaking at once: "une vraie crise de délire, telle une maladie contagieuse, un étrange sida verbal" (586). The realms of madness, contagion and language again fuse together signaling that the freedom that comes from openness is viewed by the established order as a virus that needs to be contained.

The Reader's Apophenia

L'Oiseau schizophone presents "les signes au paroxysme de l'image" (147). Normally in reference to the highest intensity or peak of an illness or a measurable condition, the paroxysm here is an excess of the visual in the work. The typography, page layout and externalization of the word through schizophrenic language all add visual elements that interrupt the text along with the actual sketches. In this context of overlapping medical and literary terminology, the word "signes" (as both "symbol" and "observable symptom") underscores the link between clinical diagnosis and critical reading as two forms of the same method of interpretation. As readers, we are actively looking for signs within the "paroxysme de l'image." *L'Oiseau schizophone* requires a high level of reader engagement. Critics insist on the role of the reader as "work" (Jonassaint "D'un exemplaire" 267) or as an "obligation" (Glover 41). Unable to find our bearings in the areas we have been conditioned to look for them—plot, character development, syntax, lexicon, or text orientation—we must make time to uncover each page for ourselves. In

124

making the reader complicit in the creative process, Spiralist writing is necessarily also a Spiralist reading practice. The schizophrenic elements of *L'Oiseau schizophone* therefore extend to how we try to interpret or "digest" the material.

Apophenia, or "the perception of patterns or casual connections where none exist" (DeYoung 63), is a common phenomenon shared by anyone who has ever seen an animal in a cloud or a face in a piece of toast. An increased willingness to see and make such connections is one of the shared traits of highly creative people and schizophrenics alike. In reading *L'Oiseau schizophone*, our eye performs a similar search. We know the images do not serve as illustrations of the text, nor the text as ekphrasis of the images. Our brains nevertheless try to fit disparate pieces together to make meaning. The disjointed nature of text and image conditions us to practice more unexpected assemblages. How could the words "visage   paysage" (692) not describe the image directly above them? In this abstract mass of curving, intersecting lines two centrally positioned eyes subtly transform some of the lines around them to read as a face. Our heightened apophenia gives us a certain level of freedom to make our own combinations and find sense in an otherwise random smattering of information. Even while we are collaborating with the author, this kind of interpretive practice is necessarily more individualized to each reader's unique pattern of connections, and paradoxically retreats back into the solitary. The term "hiéroglyphe" appears on page 48 alongside "scansion" "anagramme" and "graffiti": all references to writing and deciphering. It then gets pulled apart itself to become "Hier aux griffes." With the position of "hiéroglyphique" to the ink drawing on page 178, I can read it only as a kind of hieroglyphic, but what it represents is unclear. What we may see in this image— from face, eye, hand, cross, leg, hair, or simply abstraction—is akin to a Rorschach test. In opposition to the image and the previous allusion to decryption, the placement of "La faillite" at

a 90-degree angle to this text-image pairing, in an identical size and font, throws doubt on these drawn connections. Similarly, the frequent references to mirrors influence how I read the image on page 614 of different close-up angles of a fractured face, which finds resonance with a line hundreds of pages away: "Je me détruis à me nourrir de paradoxes, autant que je me disperse en miettes filandreuses éparpillées sur de longs chemins embégayés de vents et d'orages" (134). In making these connections, I begin to trace my own line of reasoning through the work. Doing so in fact fulfills Frankétienne's call in *Ultravocal* for a Spiralist reading practice that does not have to read the pages consecutively as they are bound.

Both *Ultravocal* and *L'Oiseau schizophone* play on our willingness to fill in the gaps even at the lexical level, reminding us of our complicit role in the "jeu terrible de l'écriture" (*Ultravocal* 7). Word fragments in *L'Oiseau schizophone* resemble a partially erased passage that is "close to disappe-" itself: "loyal qu'une femm tout près de dispar   dans le sujet   père argent   les homm au sourire   plus chaleur" (203) (Figure 7). In *Ultravocal*, as Vatel "condamné à l'errance" (8) pursues the villainous Mac Abre, he tries to decipher writing on scraps of paper he finds along his journey. Even as he fills in missing letters and words, he can never be sure which hypothesis is correct.[25] This is an isolating process, one that seems to push us away from a collective and mutual understanding, as we forge our own individual path. In this way, the Spiralist reading practice, which is at once deeply collaborative, also replicates the inherent solitude of writing. As the focus remains on the search as opposed to any final answer,

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[25]A part reads: "Vendre les fortes décl de Mac au moment de son investiture ide la séance de cloture en 1968" (147). We follow the progression his detective work thought by thought: "Il s'agissait pour lui de reconstituer ce qui avait été publié dans le journal, en ajoutant les éléments absents. Les hypothèses abondèrent. Vendre. Mais vendre quoi. Vendredi. Vendre la mèche. Vendre le chat. Vendre les. Non. Vendredi sans aucun doute. Les fortes décl. Déclivités, Déclarations. Déclamations, Déclinaisons. De quelqu'un. D'un certain Mac. Donc déclarations de Mac…… au moment de son investiture….. ide. Aide. Laide. Vide. Impavide. Froide. Bolide. Régicide. Suicide" (148).

we are left with a process of unending reconstitution that resembles what scholars of

schizophrenia describe as a disruption of "perceptual organization": a cognitive inability to

distinguish between meaningful and unmeaningful information and structure perceptual

information into groups with common denominators.[26] The barrage of disparate details either can

never arrange into a meaningful whole, or can be reconfigured into multiple possible

arrangements which hold meaning only for the individual making them.

At once in collaboration with the author and deeply individualized, the soli(d/t)ary

process of working through *L'Oiseau schizophone* resembles the relationship between spectator

and screen. For Ils Huygens, Deleuze's time-image creates an infinite number of possible

associations and therefore a space of perpetual questioning: "The impossibility of giving the film

a single and unitary interpretation makes us think and rethink the image in an endless chain of

possible interpretations, in a continuous exchange between image and viewer, between brain and

screen" ("Deleuze"). This continuous exchange is at the heart of *L'Oiseau schizophone*'s

psykinérama and apophenia is a vital trait of this collaborative process. On the openness/intellect

spectrum of what is known as the "Big Five" personality traits, apophenia is strongly correlated

to openness. It is this openness to making new connections from "impossible" patterns that

harnesses the realm of the imagination. In eliciting a heightened apophenia in the reader,

L'Oiseau schizophone pushes us to think beyond what we already know, to imagine a space

outside the framework of literary representation. Through the framework of psychosis, Spiralist

writing/reading collaboration traces new paths through the same space that encourages us to

imagine possibilities for rethinking other institutions outside that of literature. As Erin Soros

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[26]See L. Sass and J. Parnas, "Schizophrenia, consciousness, and the self,*" Schizophrenia Bulletin*, vol. 29, 2003, pp. 427-444; and Elizabeth Pienkos, "Intersubjectivity and Its Role in Schizophrenic Experience," *The Humanistic Psychologist,* vol. 43, 2015, pp. 194-209.

reminds us in her examination of madness and Indigenous writing: "To think the possible, to imagine the not-yet—is this not also a form of madness?" (74).

Experimenting/Experiencing the text

Despite his prolific career in both art and literature, Frankétienne has not received the same level of scholarly attention as other Haitian or Caribbean contemporaries. One could argue that Frankétienne's works are inaccessible: on a practical level in their limited circulation, on a linguistic and formal level in their untranslatability, and on a philosophical one in their opacity. Admittedly, any formal analysis is somewhat ill-equipped to describe or interpret them, as the drive to categorize and make sense runs counter to Frankétienne's deliberately unstable form that frequently turns back onto itself and resists both a linear narrative and a linear reading. Even something as banal as a citation becomes problematic because it does not capture the disparate font sizes, placement on the page, or surrounding images. A similar trouble arises in film criticism, as Herzog observes: "a film cannot be distilled to an analyzable structure that originates from outside itself. Instead, each film-image is contingent, particular, and evolving" ("Images"). And yet, despite our hesitations to respond to an "open work" with a closed analysis, we should consider the call to action at the heart of so much of his writing: "Il importe de chercher. De modifier. De fouiller. De détruire. De reconstruire" (*Ultravocal* 368). If we are involved in a collaborative process, there is nothing to do but forge our way through the "pre-text"; making unavoidable modifications is in fact keeping the work in motion.

Glover sees the lack of scholarly recognition from the albeit Western-dominated literary institutions as a product of the Spiralists' rejection of theory: "By refusing to provide interpretive tools, the Spiralists have in many respects foregone the accumulation of cultural capital and, consequently, the international (Euro-North American) cachet/distinction/reputation enjoyed by

their more "invested" contemporaries" (*Haiti* 23). What Glissant theorizes, Frankétienne puts into practice, a distinction Glover succinctly describes as "showing vs. telling" ("Showing" 91). In yet another paradox surrounding the artist, the enactment of theory has led to an oversight by theorists. Spiralism as a practice rather than a theory is what drives scholars to emphasize the experience of reading over the interpretation or distillation of that experience. Lenoble calls *H'éros-Chimères* "an hallucinatory experience" (342). For Glover, Frankétienne is after is "an immediate/un-mediated experience of language" (*Haiti* 192). Dominique Chancé classifies *L'Oiseau schizophone* as both "une expérience et une épreuve" (24).

The confluence of "experience" and "experiment" within the French term *expérience* is all the more appropriate, as it speaks to both the participatory role of the reader and Frankétienne's frequent rewriting of his own works, which Douglas argues reflects his "desire to keep his texts in the provisional state of *being* written" (6). While their approaches and outward manifestations are significantly different, Glissant and Frankétienne share the common foundation of writing as a soli(d/t)ary practice in which the reader acts as collaborator. Michael Wiedorn draws on this double definition to offer Deleuze and Guattari's call to "experiment, never interpret" as a lens through which to view Glissant's *Philosophie de la Relation*. He argues that reading Glissant "calls not only for experimenting with the text but also for a particular kind of interpretive experience" (xxviii). Glissant's archipelagic thought runs counter to what Wiedorn calls the "fetishization of clarity" (*Think* 8), opting for opacity over the West's insistence on transparency and assured intelligibility. Like Frankétienne's spiral, movement in Glissant's thinking resists the stagnancy of clarity. Glissant's description of the "pensée du tremblement" as a "tourbillon de rencontres" that unites us in "l'absolue diversité" ("La pensée" 526) echoes Frankétienne's view of literature as the "étincelle qui permet de retrouver l'Autre"

and of *L'Oiseau schizophone* as "une affirmation plurielle" (Chemla 117) over the individualism of traditional literature. While this reflection on *tremblement* was later incorporated into *La Cohée du Lamentin* (2005), there remain only traces of its first appearance as part of a collaboration with Sylvie Sémavoine Glissant for the Utopia Station at the Venice Biennale in 2003. The ephemeral nature of their collaboration is itself a manifestation of *tremblement*, defying the scholarly impulse to archive and therefore immobilize the *expérience*.

L'Oiseau schizophone holds a unique position in Frankétienne's oeuvre as the apogee of the experiment/experience—the "paroxysm of the image"—precisely because it remains squarely in the ambiguous space between literature and art. If *Mûr à crever* and *Ultravocal* anticipate how we are to approach this limit, the subsequent text-image spiral *H'Éros-Chimères*, as well as the rewriting of *L'Oiseau schizophone* itself, both fall short of its original experimental quality and required level of reader collaboration. Only three years after its original publication, Frankétienne modified and divided *L'Oiseau schizophone* into eight smaller volumes that compose *Les Métamorphoses de l'oiseau schizophone* (1996-7). In her detailed examination of this transformation, with a nod to the imagery of digestion that frames the work, Rachel Douglas notes that the complete "degraphicization" of the original publication (the removal of all images and the standardization of typography) renders *Les Métamorphoses* "easier for the reader to 'stomach'"(140). While she argues the act of rewriting in fact reaffirms Spiralist literary practice as a form of Eco's notion of the "open work," she does mention that the more linear volumes effectively require "a lesser degree of collaboration from the reader in order for him to forge his way through the text" (142).

Jean Jonassaint has argued that Frankétienne's second combination of text and image in *H'Éros-Chimères,* "pushed to its furthest limit the integration of image and text into *one great*

whole," to create a new genre: "the text-image or image-text, the written-painting" (emphasis added, "Beyond" 153). Here again, a more uniform composition with no continuation of sentences from one page to the next in *H'Éros-Chimères* makes its pages feel like finished, framed panels. Even with their textual elements, each page becomes an individuated and indivisible work of art. Because the integration of text and image is not as developed in *L'Oiseau schizophone*, and sentences often run on to the next page, our eye is not as able to frame out a unitary image in the same way. The addition of photography brings in a perspective and a certain temporality that is not present in the flat ink drawings of *L'Oiseau schizophone*. The photographic image creates a timeline between the past of the real captured moment and the present, which is defined in relation to this image. In *L'Oiseau schizophone* everything is happening simultaneously, or rather, the passage of time is not even evoked in the same way. *L'Oiseau schizophone* in not the "great whole" of its successor; it remains in that transitional space where text and image collide, leaving no clearly divisible sections. In this state of becoming, it maintains a kinetic energy of multiple possible futures, much like the Utopia of Glissant's *tremblement*: "[la pensée du tremblement] est l'Utopie qui jamais ne s'arrête et qui ouvre demain comme un fruit partagé" (*Cohée* 12). If we take Glover's "telling" versus "showing" paradigm down to the syntactical level, Glissant's evocation of *tremblement* as extending "*comme* un oiseau innumérable" (emphasis added, *Cohée* 12) is enacted in Frankétienne's own "mots oiseaux" (315).

CHAPTER 4: WHEN TEXT IS IMAGE: PRIMITIVE WRITING AND INTERTEXTUAL COLLABORATION IN DANY LAFERRIÈRE'S *LIVRES DESSINÉS*

> [Pour] un artiste, tout devrait pouvoir se mélanger. On devrait pas obéir à l'organisation du temps des philosophes.
>
> - Dany Laferrière, Interview with Franco Nuovo

"Dessiner est une autre façon d'écrire." This declaration found on the back of Dany Laferrière's first "*livre dessiné*," *Autoportrait de Paris avec chat* (2018) summarizes one of the main goals of this new venture, which has quickly expanded to include *Vers d'autres rives* (2019), *L'exil vaut le voyage* (2020), *Sur la route avec Bashô* (2021), and *Dans la splendeur de la nuit* (2022) to total roughly 1350 drawn pages. Everything down to the copyright date and ISBN is done by Laferrière's hand, with each page containing a different ratio of writing to drawing in all manner of configurations. While this style is certainly a new departure for Laferrière, it is not a surprising evolution to those familiar with his penchant for Haitian art. These *livres dessinés* are the culmination of Haitian primitive painting's influence on his writing: the next logical iteration of his self-identification as *écrivain primitif*, where we could say he sought to prove that "*écrire* est une autre façon de *dessiner.*"[1] For someone who has relentlessly fought against labels, the choice to align himself time and again with primitive artists is in itself

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[1] Jorge Antonio Calderón describes sections of Laferrière's texts as an ekphratic act in which "Laferrière utilise [l'ekphrasis] pour explorer la perception visuelle d'une œuvre picturale mise en parallèle avec la lecture d'une œuvre littéraire" (513). Of course, the origins of writing date back to codified drawings used for representation. The Sumerian verb for "writing" (hur) also means "to draw or trace" (Trubek 3). Laferrière's designation as a "primitive writer" comes from *Pays sans chapeau*, p. 14.

significant. Although by changing the designation to *"écrivain" primitif*, Laferrière still manages to maintain his exceptional position as what Martin Munro labels a "one-man literary movement" (176).

Like the previous collaborations examined in this dissertation, the image-text form requires more engagement from the reader, whether it be from deciphering the handwriting at varying angles and levels of clarity, carving a path through the images that disrupt the text, or altering the speed needed to digest each page. However, in light of Laferrière's frequent and transparent discussions of the symbiosis between author and reader, his drawn books only highlight a relationship that was already cultivated by his writing. Well before his turn to drawing, Laferrière insisted on the centrality of the reader to the creation of literature. He explicitly refers to the relationship as "une sorte de collaboration" in a 2014 interview: "[L]e lecteur crée le livre au même titre que l'écrivain […]. Il n'y a pas de livre sans lecteur, ce n'est qu'un trait d'union entre l'écrivain et lui" ("'J'écris pour'"). My interest in his drawn books moves beyond the collaboration between Laferrière's texts and the reader, and even between the written word and the drawn image. Because the text is drawn as well, it is no longer a question of the juxtaposition of text against image, but rather of returning both to a former state where we can understand them as two sides of the same coin. The text-image paradigm becomes one of continuum instead of binary. Laferrière's goal is to dissolve the limits of each form altogether, resulting in something new entirely so that "quand on voit la page toute seule, on est devant quelque chose de neuf, qui ne soit ni l'un ni l'autre" (Bazzo 14:10-17).

The collaboration highlighted in this chapter is instead one that takes place between Laferrière the reader—via his artistic and literary influences—and Laferrière the writer. The rich intertextuality of his previous writing is well documented and served "to play with literary

archetypes, to subvert them, and ultimately to situate his own work in relation to that of his predecessors" (Munro 178).[2] *Autoportrait de Paris avec chat,* by way of its unique drawn format, ushers in a new level of allusion, direct reference, and citation, over and above the "veiled, at times almost imperceptible" intertextuality that Munro and others have identified with different end results. I examine two effects of what I will argue is a form of intertextual collaboration: first, in mitigating his role as public intellectual and newly-inducted *immortel* of the Académie française; and second, on his continued dialogue with Haitian primitive painting and the way handwriting highlights the corporality and immediacy of his "écriture primitive" in a way that typed text could not.

On one level, *Autoportrait* follows Laferrière's election to the Académie française and the arduous task of drafting the customary speech to honor the previous occupant of his seat, Hector Bianciotti. Though at its core, *Autoportrait* is an experiment in how to tell the story of both the city of Paris and the speech writer at the same time. Laferrière uses a strategy of intertextual collaboration to intertwine these two portraits as a way to negotiate his arrival in Paris and new role as an *académicien*. The mosaic of profiled authors and artists that compose the Parisian landscape also help to define the narrator, who is a fictional manifestation of Laferrière the author. Alongside the constant reminders of his position as both reader and writer, including many representations of him in each of these roles within the book, these external influences expose the creative process itself as inherently and undeniably collaborative in nature. This book would not exist without the many artists and authors who came before it. The fact that

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[2]For intertextuality in *Comment fait l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer*, see J. Michael Dash, *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context*, U of Virginia P, 1998; Alessandra Benedicty, "Barthes, Genette, and Laferrière: Crafting and Commenting Writing in *How to Make Love to a Negro*," *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, vol.15, no. 1, pp. 89-97; Martin Munro, "Master of the New: Tradition and Intertextuality in Dany Laferrière's *Pays sans chapeau*," *Small Axe,* vol. 18, September 2005, pp. 176-188.

all of this is unfolding in a hand-drawn universe of Laferrière's creation emphasizes the physical

work involved in the writing process. Instead of going through a mechanical intermediary like a

computer or typewriter, everything is relayed through Laferrière's hand. He sometimes even

inserts his autofictional narrator into his redrawing of artworks from other artists, or "pictorial

citations," as he calls them. By physically drawing these influential figures, their texts and

artworks in his own hand, Laferrière takes ownership of them in a way that is not present in a

similar print-only "collage" like Patrick Chamoiseau's *Écrire en pays dominé*. His hand-drawn

reproductions ask us to reconsider the originality of an "individual" author and make space for

more fluid forms of identity and genres.

If calling on a host of other artists and authors to help compose his drawn books is the

foreground of Laferrière's collaborative process, his engagement with primitive painting is the

backdrop. Even though he explicitly presents many Haitian painters and artworks in the same

biographical manner as his other influences, his connection with primitive painting runs deeper.

In the drawn books, he is not trying to imitate any certain style, but rather find a more accurate

way to replicate *how* primitive painting operates on the viewer. Critics like Romuald Fonkoua

and Jorge Antonio Calderón have analyzed how Laferrière reproduces elements of Haitian

painting in his textual works, primarily through a kind of ekphrasis.[3] In the drawn books, these

ekphratic moments are replaced by "citations," thereby achieving more of the immediacy with

which Laferrière strives to endow his works. Additionally, his rudimentary drawing style

exposes the "child-like" designation often placed on primitive art and turns it on its head. A

child's viewpoint is in fact a powerful way of undermining a colonial reliance on analytic

thinking and linear conceptions of time, as well as of accessing another way of thinking the

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[3]See Jorge Antonio Calderón, "L'ekphrasis dans les romans de Dany Laferrière: Analyse d'un système d'interaction textuelle" and Romuald Fonkoua, "Dany Laferrière et la peinture."

world, a positioning he will refer to as "un autre univers." A closer look into this complex

intertextual web, with Haitian painting at its center, helps define what it means to be a "primitive

writer" within the context of these drawn books.

Identity and Self-portraiture

With the prefix "Auto-" rather than simply "Portrait de Paris," the title *Autoportrait de

Paris avec chat* plays on our assumptions of what exactly can constitute "self-portraiture." The

only figures underneath the title are the protagonist and his feline companion, sitting in chairs

across a café table from one another. The text and image of the cover work together to suggest a

certain interchangeability between Paris and the narrator. If we read Paris as embodied in the

table with a bottle of red wine and full glasses, the protagonist figure is left entirely absent from

the text of the title.[4] However, the juxtaposition of the two figures against the words

"Autoportrait" and "avec chat" respectively, draws the figure back into the duo. This first drawn

book in fact delineates Laferrière's search for how his new Parisian environment will coalesce

with his existing identities. In this experiment of city-self-portraiture, Laferrière paints Paris

through selected touchpoints of literary import (its cafés, kiosks, bookstores and publishing

houses), well-known monuments (Le Moulin-Rouge, Notre-Dame, La Monnaie, Bataclan) and

influential figures that passed through the city, alongside his own arrival and installation in a

small apartment near the Canal Saint-Martin. Within the narrative, there is no mistaking the

protagonist/narrator as Laferrière; the book recounts his invitation to the Académie and his

subsequent visits to Montréal and Port-au-Prince to procure the traditional sword and jacket each

Immortal has tailor-made. Visually, however, his "self-portrait" is in clear defiance to any sort of

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[4]The same cover art image reappears as the header of a section entitled "Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire prendre un verre
à Paris?" thus reinforcing the visual metonymy of a café as Paris.

likeness. As opposed to his attention to detail in other portraits of artists and writers to make them recognizable, he gives the protagonist such crudely drawn features that his face holds no real consistency from page to page. Moreover, the most identifiable feature of this figure is his stylized curly (sometimes pointy) bright yellow hair, a color that is also often used for the cat's ears.

This shared trait is not accidental, as we can read the cat as an alter-ego of the narrator. It is clearly fantastical and often appears to transform the inner thoughts of the narrator into dialogue. Laferrière uses his drawings to solidify their interchangeability. For example, page 301 presents eight panels, each laid out the same way with dialogue in the center and the cat and narrator on either side. It is unclear who starts the conversation and most of the lines could be attributed to either one. Similarly, they occasionally switch sides and shirt colors. The cat starts on the right in a pink shirt and in the next panel, sits on the left in a green shirt, and the inverse is true of the narrator. At the bottom of the page, there is a scribble of green to represent the narrator's shadow, but in the next panel, the shadow is pink. At the end of their conversation, the cat says he is disappearing and narrator echoes, "moi aussi" (301).

On the one hand, these two characters who are, but also are not, Laferrière are reminiscent of the line the author has walked many times before between autobiography and invention. He often signals in interviews that the author is not necessarily the narrator, and works like *Je suis un écrivain japonais* (2008) reinforce that divide. For him, "En littérature, la sincérité est le premier artifice. […] Pour mettre en scène 60% de sincérité, il faut 40% d'artifice. La vérité a besoin d'être vraisemblable" (*J'écris* 97). He works from memory with the understanding that memory is not objective reality: "je ne prends jamais de note, et je ne doute jamais de ma mémoire. Il peut arriver que je me trompe, […] Ce n'est jamais l'exactitude des

faits qui m'intéresse, mais l'émotion qu'ils ont suscitée et qu'ils continuent de susciter en moi" (145). There is nothing disingenuous about this artifice for Laferrière; it is simply part of the transformation from life to art. Changing the drawn representation of himself does not alter the fact that it is he in the same way that the degree of likeness between the protagonist and Dany Laferrière-the-author holds little import in the realm of literature.

On the other hand, the visual incongruity of the protagonist and his feline alter ego complicate our consideration of perception and subjectivity. In his chapter on the "problem of authenticity in autobiographical comics," Charles Hatfield addresses the level of graphic likeness between the cartoonist and his or her self-depiction in comics as a reflection of the cartoonist's own internal self-image over any adherence to physical appearance. This not to imply that Laferrière thinks less of himself due to the lack of detail and accuracy in his "self-portrait" relative to the attention paid to depicting other authors and artists. Rather, it is to underscore the fact that Laferrière has never much cared for the labels imposed upon him based on certain external assumptions about his skin color, country of origin, or even his notoriety as a recognizable public figure.

Autoportrait is in part Laferrière's reckoning with the weight of his new title of "Immortal," its timeless rigidity at odds with his rejection of labels and his quest to inhabit the spontaneous present. In a playful turn of the famous last lines from Balzac's *Père Goriot*, Laferrière writes "Nous deux à Paris," instead of Rastignac's "A nous deux, Paris," alongside a portrait of the narrator and the cat holding the Institut de France (which houses the Académie française) and the Eiffel tower, respectively. These two monuments represent a new chapter in Laferrière's life, one that brings with it more visibility in the public sphere. The green, small-leafed vines that decorate so many of the pages are reminiscent of both the traditional

embroidery on every Immortal's *habit verts* and the tropical foliage that pervades the Caribbean landscape. They serve as a visual mediator between Laferrière's past in Haiti and his future in the Académie. The narrator returns to Haiti to receive the news of his election, where the atmosphere is a flurry of news coverage, interviews, and people addressing him as "immortel" overlaid onto scenes of visits with his mother and a trip to his childhood town of Petit-Goâve: "Aujourd'hui me revoilà au 88 de la rue Lamarre, cette maison dont j'ai fait dans mes livres, une adresse universelle de l'enfance heureuse. Un bonheur que même la dictature de Papa Doc n'a pu perturber. Sauf qu'une équipe de télévision de Radio-Canada m'accompagne et que j'occupe à l'Académie française le fauteuil de Montesquieu" (114). Drawing this event helps to reinforce the surreal effect of these overlapping time periods, as we see him in a van with the press on the way to Petit-Goâve and him as a child flying kite with his grandmother sitting on the porch drinking coffee. He then travels to the world of the Haitian gods where Ogoun forges the sword he will need for his induction ceremony.[5] This is a universe where immortality actually exists, as Lucrèce (a character from *Pays sans chapeau* who returns to make the crossing with him) explains: "Vous savez […] l'immortalité peut être très longue. Les hommes le recherchent mais les dieux la subissent. C'est parfois agréable de se savoir mortel" (117). Laferrière credits his turn to drawing as a response to the unease around the implications of his new "immortality": "il fallait quelque chose […] qui me libère de l'Académie. L'idée de 'Voilà, je suis toujours vivant'" (Bazzo 7:47-7:54). *Autoportrait* stands as a creative counterpart to the stilted, unwavering institution of the Académie: a playful respite from its pomp and circumstance.

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[5]Vaudou god (*loa*) of war and metal work. See Phyllis Galembo, *Vodou: visions and voices of Haiti*, Ten Speed Press, 2005. For more on the *loas* and *vèvè* rituals, see Patricia Mohammed, "The Sign of the Loa," *Small Axe*, vol. 18, Sept. 2005, pp. 124-49.

Separating autofictional protagonist(s) from author through their visual discrepancies helps Laferrière disassociate his personal life and celebrity as a public figure from his in-text persona, giving him a wider creative license. Hatfield argues that for the particular genre of autobiographical comics, the author-artist must "regar[d] himself as *other*," (*J'écris* 114) effectively externalizing himself on the page. This self-objectification is a form of control over one's representation and is therefore a "radically enabling" practice (115). In this respect, Laferrière's *Autoportrait* is akin to what David Huddart calls a "de-definitional" text (30), a type of autobiographical account that unravels the "self-definitional moment" traditionally associated with the genre. Huddart models this term on Hélène Cixous's relationship to subjectivity and her distrust of the autobiographical narrative, specifically her text *Stigmata*, which demonstrates a "multitudinous autobiographical practice that for Cixous must engulf classical autobiography" (30). In Laferrière's case, creating an autobiography of both Paris and himself at once, by way of biographies of other artists and authors who were influential to both, is in line with this "multitude" of subjectivity: the assertion that everything is connected, even, and perhaps especially, when it comes to questions of subjecthood and identity.

Cixous recounts becoming aware of a student paper that was written as a letter to her: "[The student] spoke to me in the letter although *it was never addressed to me in reality*" (qtd. in Huddart 30). As an essay, it was never intended to be sent to her in the real world, but it was nevertheless engaging in a discussion with her writings. Cixous interprets this moment as proof of a divide between herself as human author and as "pure writing-being," of her transformation into text:

> This is really what a writer can wish. To have become a pure writing-being and not to be re-appropriated as a person 'in reality' which is very dangerous and totally deceptive. I'm always extremely wary in this regard. So I'm happy when people treat me as a text, which I think is closer to the truth. (qtd in Huddart 30).

Similarly, Laferrière has always privileged the work itself over authorial notoriety, saying "[t]out le problème vient du fait que l'écrivain soit devenu plus connu que le livre" (*Journal* 97). As his increasingly visibility as a renowned author and member of the Académie threatened to impact how his books were received and interpreted, he uses this de-definitional autobiography to reaffirm the divide between author and narrator. Laferrière identifies a similar transformation through *Autoportrait,* saying: "Je suis devenu écrit" (Bazzo 43:20). He has effectively externalized his self-representation onto the page and this drawn persona, split between the blond-haired narrator and the cat, is inhabiting a space "closer to the truth," as Cixous would claim. In Laferrière's case, it was not thanks to a reader of his work, but to a life of exile: the result of an untethered freedom following his initial realization of being "brusquement orphelin de tous [ses] témoins" (Bazzo 43:30-31).

Collaborators

It is perhaps with this extraordinary sense of both detachment and mobility that Laferrière brings so many outside voices into the construction of his self-portrait. In her study of Laferrière's previous intertexts, Alessandra Benedicty proposes we read certain characters' names in *Comment faire l'amour* as windows to his literary and philosophical interlocuters. For example, the only two characters to be given first and last names, Roland Désir and Valérie Miller, are but the first of many allusions she identifies to Paul Valéry, Henry Miller, and Roland Barthes's writings on desire (91). The references in *Autoportrait* require far less decoding, but prove to be no less intricate. While there is a page entitled "Montréal au bout du petit matin" (119), an allusion to the repeated line at the beginning of Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, most of the references are in the form of direct, attributed quotations, portraits or

bibliographies. Having each spent time in Paris, every author mentioned composes a part of Paris's history. They have contributed to its literary landscape just as they have added to Laferrière's own formation as a writer. This overlap manifests through the drawings and suggests an exchange that comes closer to collaboration than simple reference. The authors themselves create the portrait of Paris and are therefore more active participants in crafting *Autoportrait de Paris avec chat* along with Laferrière. Collaboration is part of what defines *écrivain primitif*, as we learn in the changing habits of the narrator in *Pays sans chapeau*: "Aujourd'hui, je n'arrive pas à écrire si je ne sens pas les gens autour de moi, prêts à intervenir à tout moment dans mon travail pour lui donner une autre direction" (12). The emphasis on dialogue and exchange throughout the work serves to amplify the collaborative nature of the project.

Different forms of real and imagined conversations take place throughout, creating an atmosphere reminiscent of *Pays sans chapeau*, without the albeit blurred markers of "pays réel" and "pays rêvé." In addition to the ongoing discussion between the narrator and the cat, there are recreations of media interviews about Laferrière's writing practice and influences, an imagined dialogue among Richard Wright, Chester Himes and James Baldwin at the Deux Magots, and one between Boris Vian and Raymond Queneau. The narrator engages in a long conversation with Coco Chanel about Jean Cocteau, the Kennedy assassination and John Updike, who appears for an interview which they also then discuss. In another scene, the cat arrives on the set of *Au bout de souffle* and briefly takes Jean-Luc Godard's place as director.

In contrast to these external dialogues, *Autoportrait* visually represents the act of reading as its own kind of dialogue that takes place between the narrator and the authors he reads. This type of interaction extends what Laferrière describes in *L'art presque perdu de ne rien faire* as the reanimating power of literature:

Beaucoup de gens doutent qu'on puisse causer avec les morts alors qu'ils vivent entourés de livres. Et toute bibliothèque est un cimetière peuplé de morts qui pensent. Il m'est arrivé d'aller rendre visite à Virgile, chez lui, je veux dire dans son époque. Je l'avais dérangé dans son tête-à-tête hebdomadaire avec Dante qui lui-même avait fait le déplacement pour le rencontrer, le temps n'étant plus linéaire dans l'univers du livre. (321)

Literature stands outside of time in the sense that we can open a book and be transported to another world. But it is the influence sparked by reading that brings the authors back to life, pulling them into "conversation" with a new context. An author so influenced by another source brings it one way or another into his own writing either explicitly, as the case was for Dante and Virgil, or without directly referencing the source, perhaps even unaware of the influence itself.

The work of *Autoportrait* is to bring all possible influences to the surface, to make them visible in a format that is itself highly visual. We follow the narrator's research into Hector Bianciotti as he drafts his induction speech. In addition to reading everything by him he can get his hands on and speaking with those who knew him, he also interviews the late author, who appears across the table from him in various states of physical presence (sometimes just a head or a pair of hands). The first two panels of the page suggest that this conversation is actually taking place within the book he is reading at the table. The cat leaves him a note saying "Comme tu es parti en Argentine, je vais faire un tour en ville" (86), referencing Bianciotti's birthplace. When Bianciotti appears at the table, the text reads "La meilleure façon de lire un écrivain c'est d'arrêter tout esprit critique durant la lecture. Tout doucement le visage de l'écrivain apparaitra. Il s'était caché derrière les pages. Soudain le voilà devant vous" (86). Discarding an analytical approach allows this more intimate, conversational interaction to manifest between reader and writer. Sometimes the "dialogue" is represented only by images, reflecting this intimacy. Page 162 is divided into eight panels which alternate between citations from Michel de Montaigne's essays and scenes from the famous Tour de Montaigne, where the narrator goes to read them.

One panel in particular shows the narrator in profile reading, facing Montaigne who is looking forward. Without any conversation exchanged, the act of reading conjures Montaigne to the page. Because the narrator cites Montaigne and Jorge Luis Borges as the two authors who have influenced him the most, they are placed in conversation with each other against a background of bookshelves and essays (160). We are not privy to the details of their exchange, as overlapping, swirling lines of all colors represent their "conversation."

Citations make up another large portion of the text. Laferrière quotes Barthes from *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (178), Camus from *L'étranger* (180), Hemingway from *Paris est une fête* (102, 276) and James Baldwin from *La chambre de Giovanni* (272), just to name a few. The authors of these texts are also often portrayed working on their craft; Baldwin, for example, with the title page to *Giovanni's Room* in his typewriter and crumpled drafts in the trash below him, or Barthes writing at a table. An outlined portrait of Balzac is filled in by titles from his oeuvre (40). The symmetry between the illustration of the writer and those of his writings reinforces the relationship between Laferrière, the reader of their works, and Laferrière, the writer of *Autoportrait*, especially since we also see a *mise en abyme* of the narrator drawing himself at work on the book.[6]

Commenting on his drawn books in a short video, Laferrière "introduces" himself first as Federico Fellini, then as Woody Allen, and finally as Dany Laferrière. He follows these introductions with the question to the viewer: "Lequel de ces trois vous choisissez? Ça vous regarde !" (Rouillard 00:22-00:26). *Autoportrait* works to blur the lines between the writer and his influences. Barthes is shown at a desk, writing the words "L'auteur est mort mais je reste le

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[6]With the exception of Paulette Nardal, the authors and artists referenced in *Autoportrait* are exclusively male, a choice we could read as in line with both their role as constitutive of a certain autobiography of Laferrière and of the phallocentric nature of the traditional French canon.

narrateur" (179). Not a direct quotation from one of his works, but rather a playful evocation of Barthes' "Death of the Author," this sentiment may in fact stem from Laferrière the author, who constantly reminds us not to compound narrator and author in his texts. There is a sort of visual slippage occurring between the two authors: Laferrière drawing Barthes writing Laferrière. The same page references Barthes' *La préparation du roman*, a collection of his 1978-1980 lectures from the Collège de France. In these writings, Barthes explores the possibility of a new form of writing that would combine the brevity and impact of haiku with the grandeur of a Proustian style, more specifically how form affects the "notation du présent."[7] Similar questions of form, time, and the transformation of lived experience to narrative are clearly at the heart of Laferrière's writing, as well. *La préparation du roman* also addresses the physicality of writing and the importance of the connection between hand and page. This connection is represented by the presence of his portrait in *Autoportrait*, and again on another level by Laferrière's handwriting.

The "pictorial citations" work in a similar way to establish a connection between Laferrière and the artists he references. These "quotations" are meant to make the artist's influence visible, in the same way one would cite an author: "C'est pas juste reproduire […] l'idée c'est vraiment de faire une citation. C'est rappeler le peintre, sans vouloir ni le représenter [...] ni penser qu'on puisse le refaire […] C'est pour faire apparaitre le peintre sur la page, comme je fais apparaître Balzac dans le texte ou un autre écrivain" (Bazzo 9:40-10:19). *Autoportrait* includes dozens of such quotations, from Picasso to Basquiat, Fernand Léger to Philome Obin. There is even an interpretive "citation" of Nijinsky's ballet *Après-midi d'un faune*

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[7]See Jean-François Bert, "Roland Barthes, *La Préparation du roman I et II*, Cours et séminaires au collège de France (1978-1979 et 1979-1980), Seuil, 'Traces écrites,' 2003." *Le Portique*, vol. 12, 2003. https://journals.openedition.org/leportique/586.

(234). Yet, just like the handwritten citations from other authors' texts, everything reproduced in Laferrière's own hand complicates the authenticity of these sources. Unlike standardizing print, or a photographic reproduction, Laferrière leaves his mark on these quotations, often with a dose of irony. On several occasions, we see the same kind of melding of certain artworks with Laferrière's, creating a testament to the power of influence in both directions. In a redrawing of a well-known photograph from the 1956 Congrès des écrivains noirs in Paris, the figures from left to right are faithful to the original photograph, but the cat stands at the right edge, almost blending in with the crowd if not for his yellow ears that serve as the only color on the page. In his reinterpretation of "Le rêve" by Henri Rousseau, the most prominent figures of the painting are present, but arranged slightly differently and the narrator, prone, floats over the reclined female figure of Rousseau's original. The words "Chez le Douanier Rousseau – le Rêve Je suis dans un autre univers" (42) surround the narrator. The phrase, "Je suis dans un autre univers," in conjunction with the narrator's reclined position, repeats several times throughout *Autoportrait*, signaling moments when there is a shift in perspective, like in a dream state (285) and often in connection with Haiti (137, 165). Rousseau was self-taught and came to painting later in life. He is often labeled a naïve or primitive painter, and even though the context is different from that of the Haitian primitive painters, the alignment between his painting and the "écrivain primitif" plays on the many connotations of "primitive" art, which I will address in more detail later. In a scene of his kitchen, there is a citation of Picasso's *Nu au plateau du sculpture* with text that reads "Afin de regarder le tableau de Picasso, j'ai tourné la chaise vers le mur et c'est devenu : Nu regardant un tableau de Picasso" (58). An abstract stick figure with a diamond-shaped head sits at the table facing the painting. While still a substitute for the "je" of the text, this figure does not have the characteristic yellow curls of the narrator, suggesting it is perhaps a more "Picasso-

like" representation of the narrator. Not unlike the altered quote from Balzac, this altered title speaks to the merged character of Laferrière and his influences. Their encounter creates a new iteration that combines elements from both parties.

Laferrière's third drawn book, *L'exil vaut le voyage* explores the shape-shifting process of reading and writer. As someone who transitions frequently between the two roles, Laferrière admits the latter cannot exist without the former; however, the former can exist on its own. He describes how he has to sneak up on his writing practice, passing through a type of unique headspace that exists in between waking and dream states. He starts by re-reading a book he knows well, one he can jump into from any page, then drifts off to sleep, waking up again to read and continue back and forth:

> C'est peut-être à ce moment précis, si on n'y prend garde, que le style d'un écrivain qu'on aime choisit de vous pénétrer assez loin dans l'esprit pour devenir le vôtre. Alors je tente de repérer le moindre son, de capter le bruit le plus allusif, la rumeur de la vie. Comme un animal aux aguets dans une forêt assoupie ou plutôt qui se réveille. Le difficile passage de lecteur à écrivain. […] Cela fait plus de trente ans que je traque cet animal mythique. Et chaque matin, il me file entre les doigts. (47)

A deer-like figure with its gaze fixed straight forward at the viewer stands against a dense overgrowth of leaves in the middle of this page, dividing the cited text in half. In this passage, the speaker aligns himself with both prey ("comme un animal") and hunter ("je traque"), underscoring the transformation from reader to writer. The reader-about-to-turn-writer is hyperaware of the possibility that his influences' style may become his own, but this is the same animal that the writer chases, one that is just out of reach. *Autoportrait* is a visual manifestation of this process from reader to writer, where the lines between originality, influence, and plagiarism are blurred and we get to see how each influence contributes to the final product.

"J'adore le mot primitif"

For books so innovative in form, their content is anything but. Many of the central themes that compose the Laferrièrien universe reappear in the *livres dessinés*: coffee at his grandmother's house in Petit-Goave, his arrivals in Montreal and Miami, meta-reflections on the writer's craft, all with his characteristic dry humor. In fact, several critics have pointed to this form of rewriting as a central pillar of his aesthetics,[8] one that Romuald Fonkoua argues stems from Laferrière's deployment of Haitian painting in his writing: "Les peintres primitifs qui peignent toujours les mêmes choses libèrent l'écrivain de l'inquiétude de la répétition" (256). Laferrière himself identifies this imbalance among artistic genres whereby writers get criticized for "being repetitive," while artists can be lauded for a series containing slight variations on the same scene.[9] Laferrière cites Jasmin Joseph as "celui qui ne peint que des lapins – cinquante ans à peindre des lapins" (*Je suis un écrivain japonais* 52) and Salnave Phillippe-Auguste who "ne peint que des jungles" (53). In *Vers d'autres rives*, he recalls noticing "the same" boat paintings by Raoul Viard in all of his childhood friends' houses. One of their mothers corrects his assumption, saying "si le sujet est toujours pareil, ce n'est pas forcément le même tableau" (45). He claims that "peindre des bateaux toute sa vie était un mystère pour moi qui changeais sans cesse d'univers" (46), but it is clear his own work greatly resembles that of a Joseph or a Viard in this regard.

While Frankétienne may point to the spiral as a guiding structure of his work, Laferrière prefers the image of a wheel: "Mon esthétique est celle de la roue, qui doit faire un tour sur elle-

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[8] See Oana Sabo, "Dany Laferrière's Aesthetic of Recycling" *French Forum*, vol. 43, no. 1, Spring 2018, pp. 97-111; Rachel Douglas, "Rewriting America/Dany Laferrière's rewriting," *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* vol. 15, no. 1, Jan. 2011, pp. 67-78; Romuald Fonkoua, "Dany Laferrière et la peinture."

[9] Fonkoua cites the example in *Journal d'un écrivain en pyjama*, where Laferrière says: "On se met à hurler dès qu'un écrivain se répète. On espère le voir arriver à chaque fois, avec un travail original" (qtd in Fonkoua 247).

même pour avancer" (Bazzo 24:23-25). With each rotation, we find equal parts return, repetition, and forward motion. Even though the wheel is physically the same, the area around it has changed, which reinforces Laferrière's instance on the question "where are you?" over the traditional "who are you?" to define one's identity (Bazzo 26:00-29). *Autoportrait* turns "wheel" into "hula hoop" for a visualization of the writing process. The page reads "Le hulahoop: première leçon d'écriture. Un sport parfait pour les écrivains" (156), as a clearly dedicated but perplexed narrator tries to make the hula hoop stay up. Of course, the self-portraits add another level to the idea of repetition, as in order to demonstrate multiple attempts, the narrator appears seven times along with the hoop, which is itself drawn 12 times. Each self-portrait is "the same," with some variation, like in the artwork of the Haitian painters Laferrière references elsewhere.

In identifying as an *écrivain primitif,* Laferrière draws our attention to the benefits of repetition; examining the nuances of variations and which anecdotes or themes get reworked gives us insight into the elements most dear to him. According to Glissant, redundancy is what characterizes both primitive painting and orality against the "efficiency" of the written word. (*Discours* 464). The use of repetition in writing signals a poetics that lies outside the boundaries of the French language. It is a tactic to combat the Western constructs of literature from the inside: "le contour créole utilise des procédés qui ne sont pas dans le génie de la langue française, qui vont même à l'opposé : les procédés de répétition, de redoublement, de ressassement, de mise en haleine" (Gauvin 18). Repetition, asides, and other detours are commonplace in Laferrière's previous works, but walking the line in his drawn books between text and image intensifies this challenge to the coloniality of literature because they force us to consider the page in another way.

Haitian primitive painting is perhaps the single largest source of inspiration for

Laferrière's style, one with which his texts are in almost constant dialogue. A particular anecdote

he returns to on several occasions is his discussion of vanishing point in relation to Haitian

painting. In the book-length interview with Bernard Magnier, *J'écris comme je vis*, Laferrière

gives an overview of the idea that he will reformulate in other texts and interviews:

> Comme tout est sur le même plan dans la plupart des tableaux naïfs, on finit par se
> demander où est le point de fuite. Je l'ai cherché jusqu'à ce que j'aie découvert que
> c'était mon plexus qui servait de point de fuite. Donc, voilà pourquoi je n'arrivais pas à
> pénétrer dans le tableau. C'est lui qui devait pénétrer en moi. […] Quand j'écris, je tente
> de faire comme eux, c'est-à-dire que j'essaie d'intoxiquer le lecteur de façon qu'il ne
> puisse penser à un autre univers que celui que je lui propose. Je l'envahis. Je m'installe
> comme une évidence chez lui. […] Quand vous êtes devant un bon tableau primitif
> (j'adore le mot primitif), l'univers qui vous est proposé n'est pas un univers d'analyse.
> (104)

This parenthetical aside "j'adore le mot primitif" appears inconsequential: an indication of the

conversational style of the transposed dialogue between the author and Magnier. However, I

would argue that above and beyond his fascination with primitive painting, it is his love for the

word itself—with all its complicated connotations—that keeps Laferrière coming back to the

idea of being an *écrivain primitif*. It is finally through his drawn books that he can most

completely embody the full range of the word's meaning, particularly the emphasis on affect

over analysis and a defiance to the coloniality of time.

The *Trésor de la langue francaise* traces the etymology to a 1310 definition of "qui est à

son origine, à ses débuts" ("Primitif"). While there may be some continuity through repetition of

certain themes or anecdotes, Laferrière stresses that his foray into drawing marks the start of

something new, a skill in its infancy that is progressing and evolving over time. Even comparing

the subsequent books to the first, we see how elementary his introduction to drawing truly was in

Autoportrait. *Vers d'autres rives* and *L'exil vaut le voyage* exhibit Laferrière's increased

confidence in his abilities: hesitating sketch marks are replaced by more decisive bold and straighter lines, figures develop more distinctive features, more attention is paid to composition: all the workings of a developing style. In all the drawn books, but most apparently in *Autoportrait*, Laferrière's creative process is more or less laid bare before the reader. Mistakes are crossed out or drawn over, background lines interrupt foreground figures suggesting a lack of foresight for what the finished panel should look like and an unwillingness to erase anything.

When confronted with the question of genre in an interview on *La Grande Librairie*, Laferrière simply says "je ne sais pas ce que je fais" ("*Autoportrait*" 1:53-55), explaining that he does not like to categorize his books as anything other than "books," as opposed to novels, essays, or even graphic novels or *bandes dessinées*. This willed ignorance of what he was producing was an intentional step in the production of these drawn books. This refusal to fall within established Western genres echoes Edouard Glissant's implication that the writer should "cahoter [dans le sens d'un cahot sur une route, mais aussi d'un chaos, de ce qui est chaotique] tous ces genres pour pouvoir exprimer ce que nous voulons exprimer" (Gauvin 20). For Glissant, as for Laferrière, the term "poetry" does not preclude prose and vice versa. Writing in 1992, Glissant acknowledges the limited nature of the confines around various Western-originating genres like "novel," "poem" and "essay," saying the Caribbean writer will therefore invent "des genres nouveaux dont on n'a pas idée maintenant" (20). Laferrière is quick to offer the term "livre dessiné" over "bande dessinée" or "roman graphique," futher underscoring a newness that distinguishes these works from traditional comic arts.

Laferrière reveals in the same interview that he had written around six hundred pages of a new book, but it was so uninspiringly predictable for him that he was compelled to scrap it all and start fresh: "Il me fallait une vacance de ce savoir-faire" (2:51-53). He therefore chose to

combine elements that were quite foreign to him at the time: drawing, handwriting, cats and even the city of Paris, as he had recently moved there to begin his life-long appointment to the Académie française. He says he knew so little about cats that he was unsure at first how to reproduce one on the page. The cat figure has no tail and usually stands upright, with only his pointed ears and whiskers to gesture towards his species. This poor anatomical rendering does of course more easily allow for an understanding of the cat as the narrator's alter ego. It nevertheless contributes to the primitive sense of a new, unfamiliar beginning.

The title itself recalls the *Autobiographie américaine* series that brought together his 10 earliest works, perhaps marking *Autoportrait* as the start of a new cycle. Indeed, Laferrière likens his approach in *Autoportrait* to that of his first novel, *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer* in that he was starting from scratch, from the unknown (Bazzo 25:50-4). Coinciding with his move to Paris for the Académie, *Autoportrait* is a way for Laferrière to incorporate a new, unfamiliar European landscape into his ever-expanding American one. He explains again in the epilogue that he had previously referred to himself as "un homme en trois morceaux" to reflect the influence of each place he has lived on his sense of self: "Mon cœur étant à Port-au-Prince, mon esprit à Montréal et mon corps à Miami où j'écrivais alors les romans qui touchent à mon enfance." With *Autoportrait*, he opens a new chapter: "Aujourd'hui j'ajoute à ce bouquet une nouvelle ville: Paris" (309). Bonnie Thomas suggests we should now consider him "un homme en quatre morceaux" (93). However, Paris is not assigned an identifiable body part, as are the other cities. In 2018, even after living there several years, Laferrière asserts: "Paris n'a pas encore de place chez moi" (Bazzo 42:11-42:13). It is in fact this unfamiliarity that sets the idea for the drawn books in motion and perhaps what sustains their production even after the

subject matter shifts focus from Paris specifically to a celebration of displacement more broadly.[10]

Laferrière describes in the epilogue of *Autoportrait* that his previous experience with drawing was limited to doodles that he would include in his book dedications. The doodles themselves, while rudimentary, were imbued with particular importance: a cup of coffee, evocative of his childhood spent with his grandmother, who loved both to drink it and offer it to passersby; a flower and a house, which for him came to represent the resistance of nature over man-made structures in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti (308). While he explains the house in relation to the flower, it also seems to stand in for a kind of home that he creates within the pages of his works, as opposed to one that would exist in any one physical location. Having lived in Haiti, Canada, and the US for substantial periods of time, his identity is no longer tied to one geographical location, but rather, as he will assert in *L'Exil vaut le voyage*, he is "au moins continental": "vivant en Amérique, mais hors d'Haiti, je ne me considère plus comme un immigré ni un exilé, je suis devenu tout simplement un homme du Nouveau Monde" (258). Being able to transpose himself as "text" through both handwriting and self-portraiture means that even though he physically resides in Paris, he can also exist within the drawn books. His approach to drawing as well as his relationship to capital can remain in its primitive stages.

Perhaps the main reason the Laferrière is so drawn to the word "primitif" is due to its charged connotations. Its complicated history and usage have a certain appeal to someone who is, on the one hand, passionate about language and words (now tasked with revising the dictionary) and on the other, provocative in questioning racial stereotyping and national identity

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[10]The emphasis on displacement is evident from the titles alone: *Vers d'autres rives* and *L'exil vaut le voyage*. The latter is particularly clear on this point: "Mon voyage […] il se passe surtout dans les livres. […] Le dictateur pensait me punir. Ce fut une récréation. Pas chaque jour, sinon ce ne serait pas un voyage. Si j'ai fait ce livre (dans faire il y a écrire et dessiner) c'est parce que j'en avais marre qu'on associe uniquement l'exil à une douleur" (403).

(*Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer, Cette grenade dans la main du jeune nègre est-elle une arme ou un fruit ?,* and *Je suis un écrivain japonais* to name only titles). The *Trésor de la langue française* traces the transformations of the term from its first meaning of "at the origin," to the 18th and 19th centuries, where "origin" became aligned with "rudimentary" as a designation of a people and later of art in relation to that people.[11] The rhetoric of development from the Enlightenment and subsequently the colonial era is reflected in the word, which after being placed in a hierarchical schema, became a stand-in for "less than" or "uncivilized:" "non-European." At the same time, Europe was trying to invent its own "primitive" artists. In 1904, the Louvre put on an exhibit entitled "Primitifs français," a nationalistic endeavor to reclaim artists of the 14th and 15th century as free from any outside influence, thereby giving credibility to French art and establish Paris as the art capital: "L'exposition de 1904 entreprend donc de démontrer qu'il existe, avant le XVIe siècle, une peinture française autonome, un art et une sensibilité identifiables qui, loin d'avoir été dépendants des découvertes picturales des autres écoles nationales, ont rayonné dans toute l'Europe" (Wolf). Later, in the interwar period, European autodidacts like Henri Rousseau and Séraphine Louis were often labeled "Primitifs modernes" or "paintres naïfs" (Erzilbengoa). Of course, the vogue of "Primitivism" brought with it both a criticism of Western paradigms in favor of a Jean-Jacques Rousseauian "lost natural state" and a problematic appropriation of an exoticized "other." The language around primitive artists carried this rhetoric of progress well into the 20th century. Oto Bihalji-Merin's 1971 publication *Modern Primitives* refers to "*prelogical* peoples" (emphasis added, 16). Describing "Primitivist" trends in art, he writes: "Around the turn of the century many artists in Europe and America were attracted to the art of

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[11]The *TLF* cites examples from Rousseau's *Émile,* Volney's *Ruines*, correspondence from Flaubert, and Levy-Bruhl's *La Mentalité primitive*, among others, to establish this shift in meaning.

154

early epochs and of *uncivilized peoples*" (emphasis added, 16). He goes so far as to say: "There

is a similarity of expression between the forms of the most ancient, original art and the imagery

of uncivilized peoples in our own day; both strive after communication and supplication" (16). It

is not clear whom exactly he deems "uncivilized" in his own era, but it is clear that "primitive"

continues to overlap with racist discourses.

Anthony Purdy sees a kind of postmodern cynicism in Laferrière's treatment of race. For

example, when in *Comment faire l'amour* he writes "un vrai de vrai, l'homme primitif, le Nègre

selon National Geographic, Rousseau et Cie" (146-47), he is manifesting "une négritude ludique,

postmoderne, fondée moins sur la revendication que sur la déconstruction parodique des

stéréotypes […] parodique son authenticité" (Purdy 54). I would argue this sarcastic attitude

rings true in Laferrière's appropriation of the term "primitif" to describe his writing, in that he is

drawing on both the ambiguity of what the word designates and on its pivotal role as a link

between Africa, Haiti and Europe. For him, Matisse's *Grand Intérieur rouge* is a "primitive

painting" (*J'écris* 105), just as is one by Lousiane Saint Fleurant or Hector Hyppolite. He even

claims it was a central point of reference as he wrote *Comment faire l'amour* (Douin). And yet

when an interviewer comments on the influence of Haitian painting in *Autoportrait*'s aesthetic,

Laferrière pushes back, saying "Je sais que vous ne voyez pas uniquement la peinture primitive

parce que vous connaissez l'art contemporain […] Il y a peut-être l'ensemble l'ambiance, les

couleurs qui ressemblent à cette peinture haïtienne, mais le reste du temps c'est très raffiné"

(Bazzo 8 :32-8 :51). He cites Matisse this time alongside Basquiat and Warhol as examples of

his non-primitive influences, proving once again his disdain for labels and his keen ability to

defy expectations. Even in calling himself a primitive writer, he insists on the global nature of his

influences. *Cette grenade dans la main du jeune nègre est-elle une arme ou un fruit?* starts with

the lines "Ceci n'est pas un roman," a reference to René Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*. Bonnie Thomas maintains that, in rejecting all types of categorization and binaries, Laferrière does not "frame his language choice in terms of a colonizer/colonized relationship" (89). Corine Tachtiris argues that, by inserting himself into Western literature instead of disavowing it, Laferrière follows a Glissantian path of Relation that in fact "force[s] a rethinking of Western identity itself" (178).

Not unlike Laferrière's, the trajectory of Haitian primitive painting has been constructed by both inside and outside forces. Carlo Célius's exhaustive account of the evolution of Haitian art identifies the 1930s as an important turning point, with Pétion Savain and the "école indigéniste" steering art to be "le versant pictural des tendances littéraires désignées du même nom" (11). It was this turn from a more universalist approach to a focus on the particular Haitian experience that solidified the existence of a "haïtianité." This deep affinity between art and literature explains in part how it is so seamlessly infused into Laferrière's writing, even though the essentialism tied up in the Indigenist movement is deeply at odds with Laferrière's own openness to outside influence.[12] In the 1940s, Haitian art was "discovered" by Europe and the US, leading to a boom in its notoriety outside of the island. André Breton's visit to Haiti and subsequent praise for Haitian primitive artists, Hector Hyppolite in particular, heightened their visibility in a European market, while aligning them with surrealism in a Western imaginary (Célius 25). Breton himself bought five of Hyppolite's paintings and wrote in the visitor's book of the Centre d'Art in Haiti: "La peinture haïtienne boira le sang du phœnix et les épaulettes de Dessalines ventailleront le monde" (Lerebours 44). It was this outsider's point of view that gave form to the artistic trends within Haiti. Célius credits Breton and two Americans, DeWitt Peters

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[12]See Martin Munro, "Master of the New: Tradition and Intertextuality in Dany Laferrière's *Pays sans chapeau*."

and Selden Rodman, as the trifecta that would set the parameters around what constituted Haitian primitive art: "Peters a jeté les bases de la légende fondatrice, que Breton a donné un héros au mouvement et Rodman a échafaudé une explication globale à partir de l'idée d'une 'Renaissance artistique en Haïti'" (100). In addition to a discourse of "authenticity" that started accompanying descriptions of Haitian painting, an origin story formed—regardless of several points of contention surrounding its accuracy—around Peters's role in discovering primitive artists and the creation of the Centre d'Art. Laferrière perpetuates this narrative in *Vers d'autres rives*, recounting how Peters "le rassembleur" (48) came by his serendipitous encounters with self-trained Haitian artists like the taxi driver Rigaud Benoit. He is able to tie the folklore to his own project when he claims that the first painting to grace the wall of Peters's newly formed Centre d'Art was a self-portrait. Including Peters and Breton in his account of Haitian painting allows Laferrière to present it as more of a global than an insular phenomenon.

Claire Reising notes the depth of the connection between the complex origins of Haitian primitive art and Laferrière's multinational positioning in the world: "The institutionalization and popularization of Haiti's naïve art movement in the 1940s echoes questions surrounding [Laferrière's] own diasporic writing, such as the role of displacement-driven exchanges in the development of new aesthetic forms and audiences' perceptions of authenticity" (59). It was this concept of "authenticity" that most fascinated Western audiences; the idea that true originality, the lack of any outside influence, could exist was almost unfathomable. One could argue that the handwriting and drawing in *Autoportrait* serves to underline the authenticity of the work; however, this "true" self is countered by the split narrator persona of the text and the insistence on a collaborative creative expression. Glissant makes the distinction between an external and an internal understanding of Haitian painting, in that it is able to extract itself from "la magie de

'l'authenticité' des oeuvres" (*Discours* 464). In this way, it is exemplary of his poetics of relation, in that it is "le signe de la communauté. La parole de tout un people" (464).

"Pour reprendre une autorité sur notre temps"

Perhaps what Laferrière admires the most in primitive painting is its immediacy: its ability to flatten distinctions between past, present and future, and the way it invades the spectator, leaving no room for critical interpretation or deconstructive analysis. He has tried to recreate this immediacy in his writing many times over. While the self-designation as *écrivain primitif* comes from *Pays sans chapeau*, the idea of writing as painting also appears in his discussions on *L'odeur du café*: "j'ai vu une image. Une seule. Un petit garçon assis aux pieds de sa grand-mère dans une petite ville de province. C'était tout le livre" (*J'écris* 97). The preface to the 2010 edition of *L'odeur du café* is even more explicit: "En fait, je n'écris pas, je peins" (10). Critics often cite the passage at the beginning of *Pays sans chapeau* as the exemplary case of primitive writing: "Tiens un oiseau traverse mon champ de vision. J'écris : oiseau. Une mangue tombe. J'écris : mangue. Les enfants jouent au ballon dans la rue parmi les voitures. J'écris : enfants, ballon, voitures. On dirait un peintre primitif. Voilà, c'est ça, j'ai trouvé. Je suis un écrivain primitif" (14). I would argue, however, that this example demonstrates more the impossibility of primitive writing than its success, as none of the rest of his writing enacts the same fractured style. A text composed solely of nouns would quickly lose its intrigue. This does not imply a failure in and of itself. Rather, with a solely textual methodology, Laferrière can only approach a limit. His writing is an exercise in trying to get as close as possible while knowing he will never fully arrive. The image is the starting point for these texts, not the final product: "Everything comes from a simple image that you nourish with sentences" (Coates 913).

Even before Laferrière wrote his first book, Glissant noted the challenge involved in capturing the immediacy of Haitian primitive painting through the French language; "la littérature haïtienne de langue française a davantage peiné à traduire ce merveilleux, immédiatement donné dans la peinture" (*Discours* 463). Artistic expression can offer a way around problematic questions of language while also disrupting the direction our eye takes across the page. Laferrière posits that because they were illiterate, the primitive painters were able to find their own identity more readily ("Dany Laferrière et Rodney Saint-Éloi"). There was no external barrier, no other systems of thought to navigate. With *Autoportrait*, "on peut regarder ce livre d'abord, avant d'y plonger" ("*Autoportrait*" 4:34-5). The image is the driving force behind his writing because it responds to his search for a way to skirt the constraints of time and present everything at once. In Calerdon's study of ekphrasis in the Laferrièrien novel, he notes that primitive painting is "une expérience esthétique totale": "L'œuvre ainsi créée ne peut pas être analysée, c'est-à-dire qu'elle ne peut pas être décomposée en ses différentes parties, car ses éléments sont inséparables" (500). The characteristic flattened perspective—the vanishing point that finds its way into the viewer—makes an especially immediate experience: "La peinture haïtienne donne une impression d'ensemble, ce n'est pas une œuvre narrative" (Theard 16). Laferrière has been keen to embrace this idea for decades: "Painting is the only art that can be immediately consumed," he asserts (Coates 917).

In his turn to drawing, Laferrière is not imitating primitive painting itself, but rather its effect. The drawn pages allow him to come closer to reproducing this totality, and through its immediacy, a certain reorientation of time. We see the narrator sitting at a desk, seemingly at work on the book we are currently reading. He explains the impact of the shift from typing to drawing: "il y a quelque chose que je n'ai jamais trouvé dans l'écriture et que le dessin m'offre

comme une fleur : le présent" (*Autoportrait* 168). In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger juxtaposes

painting and film, saying "a film unfolds in time and a painting does not. In a film the way one

image follows another, their succession, constructs an argument which becomes irreversible. In a

painting all its elements are there to be seen simultaneously" (Berger 26). Even though images in

the drawn book follow an order of succession, each page is to initially be consumed at once.

However, it is the addition of reading that allows him to exist in another time. Immediately after

the comment about the image's ability to conjure the present, he says: "La lecture va plus loin

elle me permet d'habiter le temps d'un autre. Il n'y a plus ni présent, ni passé, ni futur. J'ai

parfois l'impression de vivre dans deux espaces : l'espace du livre et celui dans lequel je lis en ce

moment" (*Autoportrait* 168). Once again, Laferrière's dual role as reader and creator is central to

his process, perhaps because in taking up handwriting again, he is transported to his childhood:

"J'ai appris à lire et à écrire presque en même temps, mais je n'ai jamais cessé de lire tandis que

j'ai arrêté d'écrire à la main vers la fin des années 70, au moment de ma première tentative

d'écrire un roman" (314). Because it is tied to the point in his childhood where he was learning

to read and write, practicing handwriting now, alongside all the reading represented in the book,

allows him to exist in both the past and the present:

> Je suis comme la tortue qui marche avec sa maison sur le dos : je garde tout, tout le
> temps. Nous sommes constamment tout ce que nous avons toujours été en même temps.
> Tout mouvement, toute décision, consciemment ou non, est régie par l'ensemble de ce
> que nous avons toujours été. Quand je parle de l'enfance, il ne faut pas y voir de la
> nostalgie, mais une période de ma vie qui ne me quitte pas et fait partie intégrante de la
> personne que je suis devenue. Ce n'est pas l'enfance symbolique, elle ne représente pas le
> pays perdu ou le passé. La vie pour moi est un incessant présent de l'indicatif. ("'J'écris
> pour'")

Understanding his relationship to time as an "incessant présent de l'indicatif" also helps to

explain the moments of "repetition" or constant return to past moments in so many of

Laferrière's works, as they are not so much "returns" as they are simultaneously present at any time.

The physical manifestation of *Autoportrait* maintains a paradoxical relationship with time because, on the one hand, it arrives at an immediacy via the quickness of its sketches, its two-dimensional proportions, and the imperfections that remain in both the images and handwriting. On the other hand, the hundreds of pages created completely by hand reveal the painstaking slowness of the process, especially for someone who is not in the habit of drawing. An intentional affront to the fast-paced rhythm of the text-message age, the fact that "il n'y a plus que le pouce qui s'active encore dans ce monde éléctronique" (*Autoportrait* 313), Laferrière admits the process was the equivalent of a year-and-a-half long vacation ("*Autoportrait*"). On several occasions in *Pays sans chapeau*, he includes a pause with the words "un temps" within the text, but that strategy pales in comparison to how he can use the space of the page in a drawn book. Handwriting disrupts time for the reader as well, whose eyes are not accustomed to deciphering it, not to mention the departures from standardized direction of text running from left to right, top to bottom. There is also no easy way to scan the book and render the text searchable. At the same time, he argues that "La main a une mémoire que l'ordinateur n'a pas" ("Dany" 4:20-22). There is not only an immediacy, but an intimacy and a physical presence in handwriting that the printed word cannot retain:

> Une simple lettre écrite à la main nous déstabilise. On est immédiatement ému que notre correspondant ait pris la peine de tout écrire de sa main – et non la seule signature. Si ému qu'on prend quelques jours avant de lui répondre. Ces quelques jours l'Internet ne le permet pas. Ces quelques journées de repos dans la correspondance frénétique qui nous tient en haleine depuis quelques décennies pourraient changer le rythme du monde. (*Autoportrait* 314)

It is this emotional response that Laferrière wants to transfuse from primitive painting to his works. Laferrière says "ce qui rend une œuvre originale, forte et différente, c'est si on sent

161

quelqu'un derrière les pages. Quel que soit la manière, si on sent quelqu'un et bien le contact est fait" (Rouillard). The hand-drawn format of *Autoportrait* contributes to a decolonial aestheSis, as outlined by Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vasquez:

> Decolonial aestheSis starts from the consciousness that the modern/colonial project has implied not only control of the economy, the political, and knowledge, but also control over the senses and perception. Modern aestheTics have played a key role in configuring a canon, a normativity that enabled the disdain and the rejection of other forms of aesthetic practices, or, more precisely, other forms of aestheSis, of sensing and perceiving (Vasquez).

Making this kind of contact through the drawn book introduces a different kind of embodied knowledge into the literary genre, one that might work to destabilize other forms of modern/colonial norms. Changing the form of the text restructures the way we process the input. The attraction of painting for Laferrière is its ability to change our perspective: "la peinture ne passe pas par une école de beaux-arts mais par tout simplement un désir de colorier le monde, de *voir autrement* (emphasis added, France Culture 23:35-24:40). This other way of seeing is why Laferrière takes up drawing. Like primitive painting, the drawn-book form is working to disintegrate binary thinking, removing the dichotomy between text and image, fact and fiction, reader and writer. In an article on Laferrière's relationship to painting, Fonkoua cites the Haitian anthropologist Laënnec Hurbon, for whom Haitian primitive painting is both "une tentative pour dépasser l'opposition du même et de l'autre" and "un dispositif qui est offert à la *reconversion du regard*" (emphasis added, qtd in Fonkoua 257). Through the emphasis on the visual and a necessary retraining, or "other way" of seeing, *Autoportrait* exposes the coloniality of the current visual field that has normalized certain aesthetic practices.

In *Journal d'un écrivain en pyjama*, Laferrière reinforces the link between body and writing, saying that "écrire est un travail manuel" (13). Fonkoua reads this assertion in

conjunction with the passage in *Pays sans chapeau* that describes primitive writing as a kind of a "sismographe" (13):

> La vitesse d'exécution est remarquable. L'écriture primitive est instantanée, immédiate, saisie directe de l'événement au moment de sa production. Le défi sismographique qu'impose l'art primitif à l'écriture fait de celle-ci une activité qui peut se rapprocher de la folie. Plus que la raison, la création fait appel aux sensations brutes. (255)

While there is an immediacy implied in the seismograph metaphor, it remains a mechanical intermediary between writer and these sensations. Created to record sensations, but detached from them, it is a perfect stand-in for the typewriter. Each has been standardized to accept a certain threshold of possible variations, as opposed to the freedom of the pen in a hand. Dennis Essar calls this idea of writer as seismograph from Laferrière "the displacement of the writer's being and personality into oblivion as he becomes a pure medium for the translation of reality perceived through sensation" (431). Handwriting in *Autoportrait* is bringing the writer's being back into the frame. Despite the attempts to skirt the question of autobiography, it is Laferrière's handwriting that acts as its own self-portrait of sorts, bringing Laferrière the author back into the foreground.

 With the invention of the typewriter came a reconceptualization of the relationship between handwriting and identity, authenticity, individuality. Darrin Weshler-Henry examines the impacts typewriters had on literature, culture and even sense of self, saying "typewriting blurred and complicated the lines that Enlightenment thinking had drawn between body and machine, inanimate and animate" (Weshler-Henry 51). When Laferrière started writing his *Autobiographie Américaine*, he switched to a Remington typewriter because it seemed to embody the newness of the continent. But it was also to distance himself from the baggage of literary tradition and memory: "je voulais sortir du tiers monde pour atteindre le temps de la machine" (Nuovo 10:28-30). Now, in his transition back to the pen, he says sitting down to the

keyboard seems too regulated and mechanical. Laferrière uses handwriting "pour reprendre une autorité sur notre temps" (12:20-24): a time that has been accelerated and invaded by the technology and industrialization of the modern era.[13]

"Jusqu'à l'enfance de l'art"

As previously discussed, the creation and publication of *Autoportrait* was inextricably linked to Laferrière's election to the Académie. He shares an encounter he had in the metro with someone whose expectations may have been shared by many around the time of his election: "L'autre jour, au métro, quelqu'un m'a apostrophé ainsi : 'tu vas nous faire un grand livre d'académicien, j'espère.' Au lieu de cela, je recule, ici, jusqu'à l'enfance de l'art" (*Autoportrait* 314). At first glance, this retreat could be interpreted as just another provocation by a public figure who delights in going against the expectations of his audience. But taken alongside his other writing on the subject of childhood, this idea of "l'enfance de l'art" carries more philosophical weight to it than a simple retort and provides another dimension to Laferrière's understanding of the many facets of the "primitive."

Returning to the example of primitive writing in *Pays sans chapeau*, we see it also contains a mention of childhood. Vieux Os's mother is getting worried that he is spending too much time typing on his typewriter. Her neighbor admits she has heard of people living too long abroad being similarly affected by this kind of "sickness" (13), but she reassures his mother he is not going mad, saying "il lui faut simplement réapprendre à respirer, à sentir, à voir, à toucher les choses différemment" (13). Vieux Os however does not want to return to "normal": "Je ne veux

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[13]Returning to handwriting is also a nod to the Académie, where much of the correspondence and proceedings are still written by hand ("Dany" 6 :44).

pas de thé calmant. Je veux perdre la tête. Redevenir un *gosse de quatre ans*" (emphasis added, 14). It is directly after this assertion that we see the "primitive writing" in action.

The idea that "losing his mind" will return him to a child-like state where he is able to enact this primitive writing risks being read as a reinforcement of primitive artists as "underdeveloped." For example, Bihalji-Merin contended that the child and the naïve painter were similar due to what he deemed their "perceptual limitation": "their disregard for anatomy and perspective are not the result of a deliberate choice of style, but rather the stamp of a less developed level of consciousness" (21). It is more likely, however, that Laferrière is using this preexisting stereotype as a springboard to argue in favor of an innate knowledge source that predates any type of outside instruction. In this case "losing his mind" refers more to a *mindset* that has been manipulated over time by a modern/colonial framework. It is possible that he found this connection while writing *L'Odeur du café* (1991), a book set during his childhood. In the preface to the 2010 edition of Laferrière reflects on his primitive influences:

> La réalité impose son style. Je me mets dans *l'ambiance de mon enfance* et j'essaie d'écrire sans faire attention aux mots. En fait, je n'écris pas, je peins. Tout en rêvant de l'art de ces peintres naïfs dont les tableaux aux traits parfois grossiers et aux couleurs chatoyantes dégagent une énergie si primitive qu'on *oublie tout esprit critique* pour vivre le moment. Pour ma part, je souhaite que le lecteur cesse de lire pour traverser la page et venir flâner dans les rues de Petit-Goâve. (emphasis added, 10)

Again, Laferrière insists on the embodied experience of the text ("flâner dans les rues") over simply reading ("traverser la page"). There is something about putting himself into the milieu of his childhood that privileges being in the moment over any sort of critical reflection (which would require a departure from this immediacy). He expands on his understanding of the essential originality of children in *L'art presque perdu de ne rien faire*, or rather the ways in which this originality is stripped from them by their education. Centralized schooling is one of the first ways for the state to impose itself on a child: "Il parque tout le monde dans une chambre

fermée en inventant l'éducation collective, détruisant à jamais l'originalité de l'enfant" (278). In fact, this process starts from birth, as we are too quick to forget a newborn has been existing in another universe for nine months:

> Il est le seul à posséder des informations précises et vérifiables à propos du mystère de la vie et de la mort. Au lieu de l'interroger là-dessus, la mère s'empresse de lui présenter son univers à elle. On a trop vite conclu à l'ignorance du nouveau-né. […] Au fond, la langue maternelle est sa deuxième langue, car je reste convaincu que le nouveau-né parlait déjà une langue. Commence alors un processus de colonisation. (276)

This rhetoric plays off a discourse surrounding the originality that self-taught artists bring to artistic spaces: "The naïve and the childlike are fantastic as long as they are undisturbed, and they are capable of discovering the world instead of merely making copies of it" (Bihalji-Merin 238). True innovation springs from non-conformity because it is not beholden to any prerequisites or preconceived notions. And yet, paradoxically, it is by searching back for this childlike influence, that Laferrière comes to invent his drawn-book genre: "Je ne me prends pas pour un peintre ni pour un dessinateur […]. Pour moi, les dessins et les couleurs, c'est un prolongement de l'écrit. Un peu comme le font les enfants. Ils dessinent et ils écrivent, et souvent ils ne voient pas de différence entre les deux" (Desmeules). It is by way of this childlike disregard for arbitrary divisions like writing and drawing that Laferrière attempts to invalidate other binary frameworks.

The one-directional linearity of time, or "l'organisation du temps des philosophes" (Nuovo 9:38) as Laferrière refers to it, is one of these such arbitrary divisions. He explains that the reason it is so difficult to get a child to understand the difference between the past, the present, and the future is not because he is cognitively underdeveloped, but that he actually knows too much: "Il est complètement au centre de l'univers, donc c'est lui qui distribue le temps. C'est un dieu, donc il n'a pas de problème avec le passé, le futur. Tout se mélange" (9:16-

9:30). Laferrière admits that he conceives of an artist in the same way, as the opening citation illustrates: someone who can exist in a universe where everything is mixed together.

"L'origine d'autre chose"

A corollary to the original meaning of "primitif" as "qui est à son origine," in the sixteenth century the word came also to mean "qui est la source, l'origine d'autre chose" or "qui sert à former des dérivés" ("Primitif"). This definition also seems appropriate to the drawn-book series, especially *Autoportrait*, as not only is it a beginning, but it is also striving to be the point of departure for something new: a different relationship to colonial logics, to the form of the literary text, and to the distinction between reader and writer. Laferrière plays upon all the levels and problematic connotations of the term, so as to let it reflect the complexities of his own existence in many different worlds. In reclaiming this childlike approach to reject binary structures, Laferrière is able to better situate himself in his new role at the Académie. In an interview on *La librairie francophone*, the host Emmanuel Khérad asks if the "childlike" drawings are perhaps to his detriment, to which Laferrière replies: "je ne vois pas en aucun cas que ce regard neuf – un regard de l'enfant je veux dire – puisse être au détriment" (25:09-23:15). In response to the use of two-dimensional figures instead of three-, he says "je dessine ce que je vois" (25:28-29), which serves once again to highlight the multiplicity of perception against what Mignolo would term a "local history turned global" of linear perspective drawing. His drawn books invoke the same effects of immediacy and emotional affect: the projection of the vanishing point into the viewer instead of somewhere inside the work itself.

Laferrière's turn to drawing (including handwriting) helps to bring certain elements of his style to the forefront, like the differentiation between author and narrator, or the past superimposing onto present. First and foremost, these drawn books come closest to achieving the

goal he sets for himself time and again: making his *words* disappear to reveal the *things* behind them. This was his "cause" twenty years prior to his first drawn book: "Que le lecteur oublie les mots pour voir les choses. Une prise directe avec la vie. Sans intermédiaire" (*J'écris* 44). This struggle over words and things is made manifest in *Pays sans chapeau* through the juxtaposition of Vieux Os, recently returned to the island after years of exile, who says "Je connaissais les mots, mais pas les choses" (184), and his childhood friend Philippe who has remained on the island, and says "je connaissais les choses, mais pas les mots" (184). Philippe says "J'espère que tu n'es pas ici pour changer les choses," to which Vieux Os replies: "Non, Philippe… Je suis qu'un voyeur," referring to his role as a writer. Philippe says it is better (and less dangerous) that Vieux is here to write a book because "Les choses, c'est nous. Ceux qui sont restés. Ceux qui n'ont pas quitté ce pays quand ça allait mal…" (171). In his works, Laferrière wants do away with the words—the distancing structure of representation—and access the things: the present reality, the rhythm and feeling of the environment he is describing. Immediately following this scene is one in which Vieux is worried about hitting people in his jeep with the fast-paced island traffic, admitting he has lost the rhythm of the place in his absence. While he claims to not understand, he then avows to the reader "L'affaire, c'est que je ne veux pas comprendre. Pas si vite. Je ne veux pas tout de suite accepter cet *ordre des choses*" (emphasis added, 172). Over and above this division between representation and reality and because of Laferrière's well-known penchant for intertextuality, I cannot help seeing an allusion to Foucault's *Les mots et les choses*, alongside its English title *The Order of Things*. Aside from the coincidence that Foucault credits Borges, who is one of Laferrière's biggest influences, this would be a fitting reference, as Foucault's text begins with a detailed analysis of Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, not for art criticism's sake, but for what the painting can reveal about systems of thought.

Laferrière looks to primitive painting because it has this capacity to bypass the thinking brain and create a direct connection to the human senses.[14] He argues that an absence of "style" is required in order to recreate a "univers sensoriel du livre" (*J'écris* 145) that will invade (*envahir*) the reader: "Mon rêve serait de ne pas pouvoir être cité, que l'on ne puisse rien sortir du contexte. Je cultive l'absence de style afin que le lecteur oublie les mots pour sentir les choses" (Douin). While it is clear Laferrière has a particular style after all these years, it is actually impossible to adequately cite from the drawn books unless whole pages are reproduced. He has arrived at the imagetext, as understood by W.J.T. Michell: "Writing, in its physical, graphical form, is an inseparable suturing of the visual and the verbal, the 'imagetext' incarnate" (95).

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[14]On Haitian painting's access to the sensorial universe, Laferrière says: "Mon credo esthétique est la peinture primitive haïtienne, parce qu'elle nous plonge dans le monde des sens, la chair, l'odeur du café…" (Douin).

CONCLUSION: UTOPIA AND THE NOT-YET-THINKABLE

> Rien dans le monde ne s'est fait sans qu'il y ait eu, à la base, une pensée utopique.
>
> - Édouard Glissant, Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist

Whether or not we ascribe to the importance of the lexical slippage Christina Sharpe proposes between "imaging" and "imagining," it is undeniable that the imagination is fueled by images. They are the conduit to constructing a mental landscape, this testing ground for new ideas to take shape. Glissant relies on visual imagery to relate abstract concepts like *Tremblement*. He begins *Cohée du Lamentin* with a call to our imagination: "Imaginez le vol de milliers d'oiseaux sur un lac d'Afrique ou des Amériques" (11). Through the imperative form, we as readers are immediately challenged to thinking *Tremblement* through the image of this swirling flock, an innumerable mass whose individual elements are connected by an invisible force. Despite the level of detail present, Glissant makes sure not to situate the scene in any one particular place: "Le Tanganyika ou l'Érie, ou un de ces lacs des Tropiques du Sud qui s'aplatissent et fondent dans la terre" (11). We can ascribe any number of settings to it, but the true site of its realization is the reader's own mind.

Felwine Sarr reminds us that our imagination is the intermediary between us and the world: "Nous n'avons pas avec le monde des relations immédiates. L'imaginaire est donc un espace de créativité par lequel l'homme se donne à voir le monde et se met en prise avec lui"

(24). Therefore, any true change in the world has to be enacted here first. It is this space of the imagination that serves as a point of refuge and a promise of possibilities for the escape from the realities of the modern/colonial framework. Glissant refers to his oft-repeated refrain "je peux changer en échangeant avec l'autre, sans me perdre ni me dénaturer," as a utopia because it concerns a change in mindset from the absolute and the immutable to the diverse and the motile:

> C'est une utopie non pas parce que ce n'est pas vrai, mais parce que ce n'est pas encore possible de le faire admettre à la majorité des humanités. Si je dis à un catholique ou à un protestant qui sont en train de se tuer en Irlande, à un Israélien ou à un Palestinien qui sont en train de se tuer au Moyen-Orient, ou à un Hutu et à un Tutsi: "Je peux être Tutsi et prendre quelque chose de l'Hutu et ça ne va pas me tuer, ça ne va pas me faire disparaître, cela va au contraire m'enrichir... ". Si l'on commence à concevoir cette idée, on lutte vraiment contre les holocaustes et les massacres d'aujourd'hui. ("Utopie" 14)

The resistance to this idea is what Sarr calls our current "crisis of relationality" (12): "Nous n'envisageons pas l'espace relationnel comme celui d'une fécondité nourricière, d'un enrichissement mutuel ou d'un jeu à somme positive. C'est le lieu d'une lutte sans merci pour prélever, agglomérer à soi, ingérer, phagocyter" (12). While Sarr is referring to a broader concept of "relation" than Glissant's specific term, there are significant overlaps in how the two center the imagination in creating mutually beneficial encounters with otherness.

The latent potential of this idea—its kinetic possibility that remains not yet thinkable to many—makes it a utopia. Glissant distinguishes his definition of utopia from the "grandes oeuvres d'utopie de Platon, Augustin ou More" (*Cohée* 224) in that theirs was a research of exclusion, of order and "Mesure," whereas the kind of utopia Glissant imagines is one of "accumulation," one of "Démesure" and unpredictable chaos. It is from this unpredictability that the radically new emanates. It is important to note that even though this distinction—and many others in Glissant's writings—is founded in contrast or binary opposition, his poetics of Relation is an attempt to go beyond a dichotomous way of thinking, even while making use of the

171

framework. His writing "manifests a simultaneous need for and discomfort with binary oppositions" (Wiedorn "Glissant's" 904).

This uncomfortable reliance on the binary form to propose something outside of it is what these collaborative works offer us. Utopic thought entails paradoxical thought in its resistance to uniformity, but ultimately it transcends categories: "L'utopie n'est en effet ni du côté du verbe, ni du côté de l'image car en tant qu'écrivain, l'image me manque, et en tant qu'écrivain, le verbe me manque aussi" (Glissant "Utopie" 11).

The space between image and text recreates the creative space of the imagination, encouraging us to participate in the encounter and draw our own path through an infinite number of possible paths. When both forms interact with each other, there is only gain and accumulation, neither substitution nor hierarchization. Traditional utopic thinking often gets labeled as "naïve," "unrealistic," "impractical." On the contrary, we should understand Glissant's utopic thinking as in fact necessary to enact change. In this way, it is not unlike Gary Wilder's idea of "untimeliness" mentioned in the Introduction in its practice of "future thinking" as a decolonial strategy of resistance. Wilder argues that Césaire's and Senghor's work lives within the dichotomy in order to highlight the futility of the form for the current context:

> Rather than debate whether their writings were African-rooted or European-influenced, we should read them as *postwar* thinkers of the *postwar* period, one of whose primary aims was precisely to question the very categories "Africa," "France," and "Europe" through an immanent critique of late-imperial politics. They attempted in a way once rooted and global to grapple with human and planetary problems at a moment of world-historical transition. (9)

Much like Glissant, while both Césaire and Senghor were very much "of their time," they were also making decisions based on what was not yet fully thinkable. It was their relationship with

poetry that allowed them to access the unpredictable, creative space of the imaginary to reach beyond the constraints of their own time.[1]

In the period between 1950-2018 when these collaborations took shape, the visual was the dominant structural form for interfacing with and understanding the world. Mary Lou Emery examines the implications of this insistence on the visual in *Modernism, the Visual, and Caribbean Literature*, effectively arguing that a visual lexicon was inseparable from the development of modernism. Often placed in the position of being surveilled, judged, objectified by the White gaze, Black and Brown people in the Caribbean have lived under the "colonial eye" for far too long. Dany Laferrière contends that from the twentieth century onwards, "l'appétit de l'œil paraît insatiable" (*L'art presque perdu* 272). It has superseded smell in the eighteenth century and hearing in the nineteenth to become "le siècle du cinéma, de la télé, de la vidéo, de l'Internet et des Japonais photographiant inlassablement la planète" (272). Laferrière predicts the eventual decline of this era to perhaps usher in a century "du goût" for whose arrival he is impatiently (if perhaps ironically) waiting: "Il est donc temps de passer à un autre sens, moins colonisable et plus proche de la terre" (272). Twenty years into the twenty-first century, he continues to participate in the extra-visuality of the contemporary moment with his drawn books. Maintaining this visually laden language, it remains to be seen what a century driven by taste (in both senses of the word) would look like for Laferrière's literary production. I cannot see how Jorge Antonio Calderón's assessment that "l'art est, pour Laferrière, un système d'interaction

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[1] Wilder reads Césaire's *Cahier* as a manifestation *avant la lettre* of Césaire's "poetic knowledge": "a process of aesthetic understanding that points beyond easy oppositions between form and content, thought and action, art and politics, universalism and particularism, freedom and necessity, subjective will and objective constraints" (*Freedom* 22).

[…] la littérature ne saurait exister isolée des autres formes d'art" (Calderón 512) would not

remain a constant.

It is this interaction, this "rencontre bien totale," that drives all the authors examined in

this dissertation, even if the particular works that showcase their overt engagement with visual

art represent a small percentage of their oeuvre. Collaborating with images allows them a certain

freedom generated by a distancing from language. Césaire finds this freedom in Lam's painting:

"Wifredo Lam, le premier aux Antilles, a su saluer la liberté. Et c'est libre, libre de tout scrupule

esthétique, libre de tout réalisme, libre de tout souci documentaire, que Wifredo Lam tient,

magnifique, le grand rendez-vous terrible : avec la forêt, le marais, le monstre, la nuit, les graines

volantes, la pluie, la liane, l'épiphyte, le serpent, la peur, le bond, la vie" ("Lam" 51). Richard

Watts sees the addition of Lam's sketches to the translation of *Cahier* as a freeing move: "a

liberation rather than a constriction of the text's signifying potential" (20). The fundamental

communicative goals of language pose a frustrating challenge to Frankétienne: "Dans ma

peinture, je ne suis pas obsédé par l'aspect communicatif, je me sens beaucoup plus libre que

dans mes textes" (Jonassaint "D'un exemplaire" 271). He speaks of the mere principals of syntax

as a form of imprisonment. The freedom in images is a move away from the realm of intellect to

one of sensations.[2] In a similar respect to Patrick Chamoiseau, who identifies comics as a

liberating genre, painting allows Frankétienne to distance himself from language's propulsion

towards communicating a message. While for Chamoiseau the comic genre was a lower stakes

space, not caught up in the canonical tradition of high literature, for Frankétienne the problem

lies within language as a form. Even as Laferrière seems to resolve some of the restrictions of

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[2]Frankétienne says: "Je reste encore prisonnier de certains schémas de la production littéraire, ne serait-ce qu'au niveau de la syntaxe. La peinture s'adressant beaucoup plus aux sens qu'à l'intelligence, je me sens beaucoup plus libre dans le domaine pictural" (Jonassaint "D'un exemplaire" 271).

language by claiming to write "en français dans toutes les langues," ("Les interviews" 4:30), he nevertheless insists that "c'est la liberté royale qui était la grande promesse de l'art" (Desmeules).

In proposing we attend more closely to these authors' engagement with the visual arts and to the image-text collaborative form in the space of the Caribbean, I am advocating we turn to the not-yet-discovered potentials of this "promise."

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