

Haiti's deperipheralization

As we have already suggested, the main difference between Martinique and Haiti stems from their different histories. The independence that the formerly most prosperous and most profitable French colony gained at the cost of the bloody struggles of 1791-1804 created suitable conditions for the emergence of an institutional framework and the territorialization of literature. Along with the Anglophone, Hispanophone and Lusophone peripheries of the Americas, Haiti shares the advantage of the political independence gained during the first phase of decolonization in the late 18th and first third of the 19th century. We also encounter here a number of features of nation-state formation as elucidated in works by Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Gérard Bouchard (Gellner, 1983; Anderson, 1991; Bouchard, 2001): an identity based on a single territory, historical awareness and language. In the case of Haiti, however, this has always been a fragile identity. Since the very beginning such an identity has been discussed, a number of issues have remained contentious, for example the linguistic ambiguity of the relationship between French and Creole, the initial absence of a history of the indigenous as well as other cultures, and a historical memory which to some extent is still being reconstructed. Nevertheless, during the very first years on independence the Haitian state began creating its own institutions: 1811 saw the founding of both the first printing press, where the *Gazette royale* was printed, as well as the launch of the Opéra du Cap theatre; the *Académie royale* was established in 1815, and the lycée (college) in 1816 in Port-au-Prince. These initial efforts were followed by the creation of institutions of public education beginning in the 1860s: the Law Academy (École de droit, 1860s), the School of Applied Sciences (École des sciences appliquées, 1905), the Central Agronomic School (École centrale d'agriculture, 1924), as well as the (Medical and Pharmaceutical School (École de médecine et de pharmacie, 1926). Historiographical works were being produced: *Histoires Caciques d'Haïti (Cacique Stories from Haiti, 1837)*, in which Émile Nau bases the island's historical identity on the resistance of the Taíno chiefs; Thomas Madiou's *Histoire d'Haïti (History of Haiti, 1847)*, and Baubrun Ardouin's *Études sur l'histoire d'Haïti (Studies on Haitian history, 1865)*. Territorialization and the appropriation of a Haitian view of history took place at roughly the same time as in Francophone Canada (see above) as well as in the emancipation movements of peripheral regions in Europe (for example in the Czech lands, Germany, Hungary, etc.). The main difference between these movements and that of Haiti lies in the issue of race and in the accompanying argument against scientific racism, for instance as put forth in Arthur de Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines (The Inequality of Human Races, 1855)*. The idea of biological and cultural white superiority was criticized by two Haitians in particular, Pierre Faubert in *Ogé ou le préjugé de couleur (Ogé or the Color Prejudice, 1859)* and Joseph-Anthénor Firmin in *De l'égalité des races humaines. Anthropologie positive (On the Equality of Human Races. Positive Anthropology, 1885)*. Both of these polemics were published in Paris. Haiti proudly presents itself as the first free, unconquered black state in the world. This identity as inscribed in the national memory permeates the attitudes of certain Haitian writers to this day, as is suggested in Louis-Philippe Dalembert's testimony regarding the avant-garde poet René Philoctète. The poet rejected the minor manuscript changes demanded by a Parisian publisher, preferring to publish the text "many years later in Haiti, at his own expense" (Dalembert, 2010: 35).¹ In his presentation of Haitian literature, Dalembert cites this detail as a synecdoche for Haiti's attitude towards the Parisian center. Even if we take this one example *cum grano salis*, it is essential not to lose sight of the spirit of obstinacy expressed by it. The two centuries of Haitian history following independence were filled with traumatic events: economic blockades, government instability, dictatorships, uprisings, invasions, as well as

¹ "[...] bien des années plus tard, en Haïti, à compte d'auteur."

occupations, the longest of which by the United States (1915-1934). Waves of exiles and repeated natural disasters have contributed to the misery of the island. In spite of this, Haitian society has created national heroes (Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines), political (Alexandre Pétion) and cultural elites (Jean Price-Mars, Jacques Stephen Alexis, Jacques Roumain), institutions such as the Bibliothèque Nationale (1939), the Institut d'Ethnologie (1941), a system of public, private and religious educational institutes as well as two universities (Université d'État d'Haïti, 1960; Université Caraïbe, 1988).

Compared to the French West Indies, throughout its history Haiti has been much more broadly exposed to the pressures of Euro-Atlantic powers – France, Great Britain, Spain, Germany, the United States – as well as to the cultures of neighboring countries. Thus Haitian Caribbeanness and Americanness are more diverse than that of Martinique, being more open to Hispanophone (Dominican Republic, Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico), Anglophone (United States, Canada) and Francophone (Quebec) regions.

Historical circumstances have also influenced the linguistic situation and the relationship between Creole, a language which is widespread and shared by all levels of society, and the French of the educated bourgeois elites. The economic, social, and cultural intersection between the majority of the black rural population and the urban mixed middle and upper classes has created the cultural binarism of the oral culture in Creole and written literature in French. The question of language thus permeates the entire culture. In the case of Haiti, this includes the preservation of oral genres, folk customs, along with religious ideas associated with animistic voodoo practices.

While the cultural integration of the countryside into the urban environment was concomitant with urbanization, this is also the result of the search for identity and self of the elites, who have referenced their folk roots in literature and culture since the 19th century. Paradoxically, the penetration of Creole would intensify under François Duvalier's dictatorship (1957-1971), with the voluntary or forced emigration of Francophone mixed-race elites and professional professions accentuating the need for Creole.² As a result, it received recognition as an official language in the post-Duvalier Constitution of 1987 alongside French. In the late 1970s, Creole was introduced into the school curriculum and programs, with the orthography also standardized independently of French spelling rules.

Official bilingualism does not mean true equality. Nevertheless, the oral tradition and Creole entered into French written literature both thematically (Jacques Roumain, René Depestre, Gérard Étienne, Dany Laferrière and others) and genre-wise, primarily as written literature adopted oral genres such as the *cont* and *lodyan* (see Anglade, 1999, 2000, 2002).³

Gradually, written Creole as literature was also taking shape. Of numerous examples, we might mention the poetry collection *Diacoute (Pouch, 1953)* and the tragedy *Antigòn (1953)* by Félix Morisseau-Leroy (Felix Morisseau-Lewa), Michel-Rolph Trouillot's historiographical essay on the Haitian slave revolt *Ti difé boulé sou istoua Ayiti (A Short Talk on Haitian History, 1977)*, or the novel *Dézafi (Throes of a Challenge, 1975)* by Frankétienne (Jean-Pierre Basilic Dantor Franck Étienne d'Argent), which also was translated into French under the title *Les Affres d'un défi (1979)*. Haitian expatriates in Quebec continue to publish literature and cultural information on the bilingual Creole-French website Potomitan, which takes its name from the central supporting "post" of a voodoo shrine. In contrast to the creolized French proposed by Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant in *Éloge de la créolité / In Praise of Creoleness*, Haitian literature follows more closely the concept of two languages and two interrelated literatures in terms of themes and genres, as the number of publications in Creole suggests. According to Louis-Philippe Dalembert, the separation and bipolarity which currently

² An estimated 80% of professionals emigrated during the 1960s. See Křížová, 2009: 76.

³ *Cont* (from the French conte) can be roughly translated as fairy tale or story, while the *lodyan* form (from the French l'audience) corresponds to storytelling drawn from real life situations performed for an audience.

characterizes a significant number of Haitian authors writing simultaneously in both languages, “lightens” (“allège”) and “makes ordinary” (“banalise”) the relationship with French, allowing writers to treat language with complete freedom (Dalembert, 2010: 52). Dalembert’s opinion is contained in his critical response to an encomium once offered by André Breton with regard to Aimé Césaire’s excellent French language skills. This “compliment” can also be seen as an instance of a representative of the center assuming the power to bestow the right of language appropriation upon a member of the periphery:

Believing it to be a compliment, André Breton said of Aimé Césaire: “A black man who writes French like few Whites”; history will no longer tell us how the person in question perceived this, or whether Breton was even aware that he was uttering a racist compliment. (Dalembert, 2010: 50)⁴

With regard to Haitian literature written in French, the path to autonomy has been facilitated and deperipheralization supported by institutions that were established by Haitian elites – printing houses, schools, theatres, libraries, academic organizations, appreciation societies and clubs, etc. Literary journals remain of considerable importance to literary life. Although some of these publications were short-lived, they form an almost continuous series from the end of the 19th century to the present day. *L’Abeille haïtienne* was established in 1817, while at the end of the century the Parnassian, decadent, and symbolist review *Jeune Haïti* (1895-1898) came into operation, followed by *La Ronde* (1896-1901) and *La Nouvelle Ronde* (1925) in the first decades of the 20th century. The modernist *La Revue indigène* (1927-1928) supported the nationalist program, followed by the radical and later more explicitly nationalist *Les Griots* (1938-1940) as part of the Noirism movement. The avant-garde *La Ruche* (1945-1946) and later *Semences* (1961) published by the Haïti Littéraire movement would open up Haitian journals to an international readership. *Petit Samedi* (1973-1992) and later *Chemins critiques* (1989-2004, 2017) would be active in Haiti during and after Duvalier’s dictatorship, while *Nouvelle optique* (1971-1973), *Collectif paroles* (1979-1987) and *Dérives* (1975-1987) became organs of Haitian exiles in Montreal. This overview is merely illustrative to clarify the link between literary currents and periodicals, even the titles of which suggest a gradual detachment from European movements and aesthetic values.

The specificity of Haiti’s deperipheralization stems from the intersection of influences emanating from several centers. The French influence is counterbalanced by the attraction of Anglophone and Francophone American culture as well as the impact of the Caribbean environment. Overall, the points of reference were gradually shifting from Europe to America, a track which can be traced in the studies, formative sojourns, careers, and connections of Haitian intellectuals. Until about the late 1950s, Europe and Paris predominated, while from the 1960s onwards Haitian attention turned to the United States, Canada and, above all, Francophone Quebec. The poet Oswald Durand (1840-1906) was honored to be received in Paris by François Coppée. The academic studies as well as the various phases of the careers of Jean Price-Mars (1876-1969), and later Jacques Roumain (1901-1944), Émile Roumer (1903-1988), Jacques Stephen Alexis (1922-1961) along with many others are linked to Paris and Europe. Among the last influential intellectuals that can be called Paris-oriented we can find René Depestre (*1926) and Yanick Lahens (*1953). Nevertheless, by the time of Duvalier’s dictatorship, most intellectuals were already finding employment either in Africa, especially in Senegal thanks to President Léopold Sédar Senghor, for example Jean-François Brierre, Max Charlier, and Félix Morisseau-Leroy, or in Cuba, for instance Philippe Thoby-Marcelin and

⁴ “Croyant formuler un compliment, André Breton a dit d’Aimé Césaire: “un Noir qui écrit le français comme il y a peu de Blancs”; l’histoire ne nous révèle pas comment l’a perçu l’intéressé, ni si Breton était conscient de formuler un compliment raciste.”

René Depestre, with the latter staying until 1971.⁵ Others permanently or temporarily settled in the United States such as Jeanie Bogart, Jean-André Constant, Réginal O. Crosley, Fritzberg Daléus, Ruben François, Paul Laraque, Serge Legagneur, Roland Menuau, Jean de Montreux, Max Freesney Pierre, and Évelyne Trouillot. From the U.S., some moved to Montreal, Quebec, where the largest cohort of exiles was organized, including Franz Benjamin, Robert Berrouët-Oriol, Joëlle Constant, Villard Denis, Joël Des Rosiers, Gérard Étienne, Franck Fouché, Eddy Garnier, Fayolle Jean, Saint-John Kauss, Gary Klang, Jean-Richard Laforest, Roland Morisseau, Émile Ollivier, Anthony Phelps, Lenous Suprice, and Dany Laferrière. It is in Montreal that members of the Haitian intellectual diaspora began to develop their most significant activities.

The shift in the network of relations and ties from Europe to America is also evident within the Haitian literary field, within which the attraction of the Parisian center prevailed throughout the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. Haitian writers at this stage not only imitated French models, but their attempts at catching up to wider discourses of peripherality was becoming evident, as shown by many authors' hasty efforts toward the amalgamation and hybridization of Romantic, Parnassian, Decadent, and Symbolic practices. Some writers felt to be a part of French culture, for example Etzer Vilaire (1872-1951), who dreamed of "the entry of the Haitian elite into the literary history of France" (Laroche, 1981, 30).⁶ As late as the 1950s, we come across a diplomatic statement by Jean Price-Mars in which Haitian culture is assigned the role of torchbearer of French culture on the far periphery:

We are [...] on this side of the Atlantic the heirs of the traditions and civilization of a great country and a great nation which on the world scale represents one of the six or seven powers [...] not so much in territorial size and population, but in the glow of institutions, in the glory of ages of history, and in the sweep and influence of a culture of many centuries. We feel indebted to France [...] and to the world for the stewardship of this spiritual heritage. (Price-Mars, 1959: 102)⁷

On the American continent, the work parallels the efforts of French-Canadian folklorists and linguists (see above p. XXX) and, finally, the earlier activities of European folklorists of the Romantic period. In the Haitian context, Price-Mars's work represents a break with the Parisian center, making a statement that aims to affirm local values that would subsequently be developed thematically and literarily by the Haitian avant-gardes. Even before the emergence of the Négritude movement, Haitian poets and novelists had founded a review dedicated to Indigenism, *La Revue indigène* (1927-1928). The indigenists, including Carl Brouard (1902-1965), Émile Roumer (1903-1988), and Jacques Roumain (1901-1944), were not preoccupied with a backward-looking conception of folklore, but were set on integrating local themes into current global avant-garde movements. Jacques Roumain, a friend of the Harlem Renaissance exponents Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes, infused his free verse with jazzy rhythmicity. Roumain's novel *Gouverneurs de la rosée* (1944, *Masters of the Dew*, translated by Langston Hughes and Mercer Cook in 1971) combines rural themes and voodoo imagery with a realistic depiction of the Caribbean and Haitian countryside. The work represents a pillar of the modernist canon of Haitian literature as well as proof that the indigenists were at least by mid-20th century moving beyond the local towards the worldly.

⁵ See the section The Deperipheralization of Spanish Latin America on the relocation of Hispanic centrality to Havana in the 1960s. XXX)

⁶ "[...] l'avènement d'une élite haïtienne dans l'histoire littéraire de la France."

⁷ "Nous sommes [...] de ce côté-ci de l'Atlantique, les héritiers des traditions et de la civilisation d'un grand pays et d'un grand peuple qui figurent dans le calendrier mondial comme l'une des cinq ou six grandes puissances parmi les plus grandes [...] moins par l'étendue de son territoire et par le nombre de ses habitants que par la splendeur de ses institutions, la gloire d'un long passé historique et le dynamisme d'une culture rayonnante et multi-séculaire. Nous nous croyons redevables envers la France [...] et envers le monde de notre gestion de ce patrimoine spirituel."

The next stage is marked by the magazine *Les Griots* (1938-1940), associated with the Noirists, a movement that represents a contradictory crossroads of future contradictory tendencies (Famin, 2017). On the one hand, it radicalized the autonomizing search for an essentialist “national spirit,” while on the other, it accentuated the avant-garde. These contradictions stemmed from the nature and focus of the founders of the review, with continuity with the previous *La Revue indigène* represented by Carl Brouard. Other Noirists included the ethnologist Lorimer Denis (1905-1957), who was interested in the cult and culture of voodoo; the physician, poet and future dictator François Duvalier (1907-1971); and finally the surrealist Clément Magloire-Saint-Aude (1912-1971). The contradiction between right-wing nationalism and left-wing avant-gardism would spill over in the following periods into the persecution of the cultural and liberal left during Duvalier’s dictatorship.

It is not our intention, however, to discuss the history of Haitian literature, but simply to delineate here the decisive turning point of the 1930s and 1940s in the process of Haitian deperipheralization. The Haitian initiatives occurred in parallel to the Négritude movement in Paris, but were independent of it. Haiti came to absorb both European and North American impulses: Clément Magloire-Saint-Aude and René Bélance (1915-2004) translated Breton’s surrealism into a technique of the conceptualism of juxtaposed images, while the Harlem Renaissance inspired both the subject matter as well as the poetic technique of rhythmic free verse, as seen especially in the poetry of Jacques Roumain.

The transformation in this phase can be illustrated by André Breton’s visit to Haiti in December 1945. This visit, which took place at the invitation of the Cuban painter Wilfred Lam and the director of the French Institute René Mabilie, was preceded by Aimé Césaire’s lectures at the French Institute in Port-au-Prince in December 1944. Both of these events testify to the quality of the reception environment, the large and knowledgeable audience as well as the excellent organization of the time period. Breton’s visit included a radio interview, the responses to which concerned both the indigenist generation and the newly forming avant-garde around the magazine *La Ruche* (1945-1946), which included René Depestre (*1926) and Jacques Stephen Alexis (1922-1961). Thus, while Haiti indeed absorbed new impulses, it did so in its own way, without direct imitation (Obszyński, 2015: 88 ff.).

Haiti’s deperipheralization is characterized by a decisive although not sharply formulated break with previous stages. Finding its own ways, Haitian literature makes use of its peripheral capacities of absorption, juxtaposition and integrative blending. An early example of these tracks can be seen in Jacques Stephen Alexis’s program of Haitian Miraculous Realism (*réalisme merveilleux haïtien*) presented in 1956 at the Sorbonne in Paris as part of the First Congress of Black Writers and Artists. The meetings were presided over by Jean Price-Mars. Alexis’s lecture *Du réalisme merveilleux des Haïtiens* (The Miraculous Realism of the Haitians) was organized by the Paris publishing house *Présence africaine*, after which the text was issued by the aforementioned publisher in a journal of the same name which is still in existence today. In the lecture, Alexis addresses a global black community with an aesthetic that transcends Négritude:

Everything shows that Haitians have adopted a distinctive approach to art, that there is at present a school of new realism created by Haitians, a school in a state of birth and gradual concretization, a school that we are beginning to call the school of Miraculous Realism, a contribution that we are presenting to the intellectuals of the fraternized black peoples and that, with the contribution of all, could hasten the establishment of this Haitian school on a clear foundation. (Alexis, 1956: 248)⁸

⁸ “Puisque tout démontre qu’il y a une manière propre aux Haïtiens en art, qu’il y a actuellement une École de Réalisme Nouveau particulier aux Haïtiens, une École qui se cherche et qui se dessine peu à peu, une École qu’on commence à appeler École du Réalisme Merveilleux, cette contribution présentée devant les intellectuels des peuples frères nègres, pourrait, grâce à l’apport de tous, hâter la constitution de cette École haïtienne sur des bases fondamentales claires.”

According to Charles W. Scheel (Scheel, 2005: 18; Obszynski, 2015: 151), Alexis's Miraculous Realism was partly inspired by Real Maravilloso and the Cuban Alejo Carpentier as formulated in his novel *El Reino de este mundo* (*The Kingdom of this World*, 1949). Translated into French in 1954, this text refers directly to Haiti. From the point of view of deperipheralization, Alexis's work by its very denomination constitutes an affirmation of autonomy that uses the Parisian center to address the entire Francophone periphery, then undergoing a phase of decolonization. According to Michał Obszycznyński, Alexis's ideas anticipate Édouard Glissant's archipelagic notion of cultural relations and Creoleness (Obszycznyński, 2015: 153).

In Haiti, the group *Haïti littéraire* as well as *Groupe de Cinq* (Group of Five) — Davertige (Villard Denis, 1940-2004), Anthony Phelps (1928), Serge Legagneur (1937), René Philoctète (1932-1995) and Roland Morisseau (1933-1995) — mark another path towards autonomy. The movement publishes the magazine *Semence* (1961) and hosts the cultural program *Prisme* by Anthony Phelps on Radio Cacique. As Duvalier's dictatorship was emerging, *Groupe de Cinq* had to limit its involvement to the defense of independent culture, which became one of the areas of civil resistance for a long period of time. From an aesthetic point of view, the action of *Groupe de Cinq* marks a departure from the essentialism of Négritude, Indigenism and Noirism. The collective's activities are directed both towards the broader popularization of culture as well as towards theoretical links to other avant-garde movements, particularly Spiralism, introduced in 1965 by René Philoctète, Jean-Claude Figolé (*1941) and Frankétienne (Jean-Pierre Basilic Dantor Franck Étienne d'Argent, *1936). The spiral metaphor signifies an escape from (literally) dictatorial reality, an upward flight through black humor, formal anarchy and experimental disruption of traditional forms. Among other orientations, Spiralism represents an artistic reflection of existentialism and social instability under the despotic regime of François Duvalier (1957-1971), continuing with his son Jean-Claude Duvalier (1971-1986). This period also saw massive emigration, mainly of the elites in the first wave and later of the pauperized population. The Haitian diaspora around the world is currently estimated at two million people.⁹ The traumatic bifurcation of Haitian literature into domestic and diasporic has demonstrated its overall viability and has in fact led to literary gains in the long run. The affirmative impacts of the trauma can be traced through several tracks. Among the long-standing factors, Haitian insularity should perhaps be mentioned, or rather the way in which Haitian elites have become accustomed to overcoming insularity, breaking through the demographically and socially narrow circle of Haitian society (including communities of readership), and making numerous contacts with the American, European, and African milieu. The effectiveness of this habitus would be seen precisely during the period of great intellectual exile of the 1960s and 1970s. It is also during this period that the organizational skills of the members of the *Groupe de Cinq* would be put to use, after they had transferred their activities to Montreal and become the organizing core of the Haitian exile community. The leading figures and positions — especially in Quebec — would be guided by “the main postulates of Jacques Stephen Alexis, of *Haïti littéraire* and of the Spiralists” (Obszynski, 2015: 162).¹⁰

The list of exiles is surprisingly long (see above). Equally surprising is the organizational capacity of Haitian elites to preserve their identity and to create a network of cultural relations and interdependent activities wherever a convenient space to do so can be found. Regarding the relationship between the center and the periphery, it is interesting to observe the determining influence of the environment in which these activities occur. It is clear that the centrality of Paris and New York has acted as a decidedly integrative, even assimilative, factor, whether it is the incorporation into the Francophone diversity of the Parisian center (René Depestre,

⁹ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haitian_diaspora (assessed 24.11.2020). Sources often vary widely, with numbers ranging from one to four million depending on the data and the way each country's census is conducted.

¹⁰ “[...] postulats principaux de Jacques Stephen Alexis, d'*Haïti littéraire* et des spiralistes.”

Yanick Lahens), or the necessity to change languages in favor of English (Edwidge Danticat). By contrast, in the Montreal environment, which in the 1960s was undergoing the final phase of Quebec's deperipheralization, a mutual exchange of ideas, debate and criticism was allowed. Thus the Haitian intellectual community within the Quebec cultural context was also able to maintain its identity, integrity and distinctiveness for at least the three decades of the 1960s-1990s. The historical serendipity of the Haitian exile, the deperipheralization of Quebec and the social emancipation of the crucial period of the Quiet Revolution should be emphasized in this context. An influx of French-speaking elites to "Frenchify" public administration and public institutions was essential during this phase, thus Haitian leaders were welcomed and were able to establish fruitful collaborations with Quebec elites on many levels (Kwaterko, 2011: 213-227). The fact that these elites themselves were not exclusively native-born Quebecers adds even more heterogeneity and complexity to discussions of center and periphery. We have already mentioned the collaboration of Robert Berrouët-Oriol and Émile Ollivier with the review *Vice Versa* (1983-1996) directed by the Italo-Québécois Fulvio Caccia and Lamberto Tassinari. The Haitians themselves set up their own magazines (*Nouvelle Optique*, 1971-1973; *Dérives*, 1975-1987; *Ruptures*, 1992-1998) and publishing houses linked to cultural centers (*Nouvelle Optique*, CIDIHCA). Links with the island of origin were never completely interrupted, with the network connecting the diaspora to Haiti also taking on a continental dimension. The diaspora's contacts continued with the aforementioned Spiralists who had remained in Haiti as well as with the Pluralism of Gérard Gugé (1923-2003), who sought to combine surrealism with miraculous realism. Also of notable interest and importance are the connections with the diaspora to the integrative intention of Surpluréalisme as articulated by Saint-John Kauss in a series of manifestos (1992, 1995, 1998, 2001) published on the aforementioned Potomitan website.

The influence of Haitian immigrants on the home culture of the receiving country has already been briefly discussed with regard to the deperipheralization of Quebec literature. Haitians have used their newly acquired centrality to Quebec to also assert themselves outside the rather narrow confines of Haitian literature. Strong foundations for this broader participation were prepared by the huge first wave of migrants — Émile Ollivier, Gérard Étienne, Antony Phelps, Max Dorsinville, Maximilien Laroche, Robert Berrouët-Oriol, Jean Jonassaint. This was then fully exploited by the second generation, represented for example by the award-winning novelist Dany Laferrière, now a member of the French Academy (although he considers himself an American author). A third generation born in Quebec the 1960s and 1970s includes Stanley Péan, Joël Des Rosiers, Marie-Célie Agnant, Henri Saint-Fleur, and Saint-John Kauss.

It is also necessary to mention the contribution of Haitian literary criticism and theory to the identity problem of postmodernism in conjunction with creative writing. Robert Berrouët-Oriol's article *Effet d'exil* (Exile Effect), published in 1987 in *Vice Versa* (Berrouët-Oriol, 1987: 20-21), contributed polemically to the debate on the integration of migrant writers into the newly formed Quebec canon. The objections that the author directs at Quebec publishing institutions are based on an analysis of the position of Haitian writers in exile. His reflections on the life situation of immigrants mark a radical departure from an essentialist, ethnic conception of the migrant condition to a postphenomenological, existential one.

In his collection of essays *Repérages* (*Detections*, 2001), Émile Ollivier (1940-2002) would follow up on the critique of Berrouët-Oriol. Starting from the dichotomy of Quebec's cultural and social tradition as inscribed in the opposition between the nomad-trapper (*coureur de bois*, "runner of the woods") and the settler, Ollivier inverts received values in favor of a new conception of nomadism. He argues for the transformations which would take place in a globalized human society:

The notions of exile and unrootedness, like homeland or state, are only meaningful for a settler society. It is only because settled societies have prevailed that laws and borders have been imposed

on nomadic societies to confine them and prevent them from moving. It is only in this way that the concepts eventually acquired a historical justification that has no natural origin. (Ollivier, 2001: 32)¹¹

Nevertheless, the judgment and negative view of nomadism and unrootedness (e.g. the French concept of *errance* can be translated as “wandering”) no longer has a place in a globalizing world in which individuals as well as populations are constantly moving around the planet. Unrootedness (*déracinement*) also implies the freedom and liberty of a new human destiny marked by “transnationalization”: individual identities are not fixed, but are instead “mutable,” individuals are “mutants” within a “fragmented society” in which it is necessary to learn to “live in free zones at the margins” (Ollivier, 2001: 37-39).¹² In such an axiological configuration, any borders – ethnic, cultural, linguistic – lose their justification and meaning, even in situations in which mixing and hybridization are acknowledged. Ollivier’s conclusions are akin to a condition that another Haitian, Jean-Claude Charles, requires for creation — an “errant rootedness” (“enracinerrance”) (Charles, 2001: 37-41).

A reassessment of unrootedness and the resultant existential overlap is addressed by Joël Des Rosiers in *Théories caraïbes (Caribbean theories, 1996)*. Here, he operates with the concept of a “postexile” human destiny manifested in the status and work of writers, i.e. it is precisely creation that makes it possible to fill the inner sense of emptiness by finding the Other. Further, Joël Des Rosiers definitively dismisses the concept of an essentialist identity as well as with the notion of national literature:

Apparently, we have already reached the necessity to do away with the coincidence of language, culture and identity. For us, every language is an expression of foreignness; our rules of art seek to distance themselves from any rootedness. For us, unrootedness has a positive value; it brings modernity because it allows hybridization, diversity, openness to the Other within. (Des Rosiers, 1996: 172)¹³

In contrast to the discourse of diaspora, Joël Des Rosiers contrasts *metaspora* (*métaspora*), a view which represents the transcendence of communitarian identity within transcultural diversity.

While the theoretical contribution of the Haitian diaspora is unquestionable, it also represents an attempt to inscribe the lesson of overcoming the center/periphery dichotomy in the transnational space. Between 1960 and 1990, Haitian literature developed in a split between the “internal” domestic and the “external” exile. Clearly, it was exile that made Haitian literature visible through as well as in opposition to Montreal, New York and Parisian centrality. Nevertheless, the same situation has marginalized insular Haitian writing. In terms of an overall view of Haitian literature, the effect may be one of distortion. Even Duvalier’s dictatorship could not stifle indigenous production or literary communication with the world. A number of great authors such as René Philoctète, Frankétienne, and Jean-Claude Fignolé (1941-2017) remained in Haiti throughout, while others like René Belance, Raymond Chassagne (1924-2013) returned to the island before the fall of the dictatorship. Alongside these writers, another generation was entering the scene, including Pierre Clitandre (*1954), Gary Victor (*1958),

¹¹ “Les notions d’exil et d’errance comme celles de patrie ou d’État n’ont de sens que pour les sociétés sédentaires. Majoritaires, elles sont parvenues à imposer aux sociétés nomades des lois et des frontières visant à les cerner et à les immobiliser; ce faisant, elles ont fini par doter d’une épaisseur historique des notions qui n’avaient à l’origine rien de naturel.”

¹² “mutants”; “société fragmentée”; “vivre dans les zones franches des marges”

¹³ “Sans doute sommes-nous parvenus à la fin des coïncidences entre langage, culture et identité. Pour nous, toute langue est teintée d’étrangeté; et notre art poétique cherche à se distancier de toute velléité d’enracinement. Pour nous, le déracinement est une valeur positive; porteuse de modernité, parce qu’il autorise l’hybridation, l’hétérogénéité, l’ouverture à l’Autre en soi..”

Louis-Philippe Dalembert (1962), and Emmelie Prophète (*1971). In addition to literature written in French, literature in Creole was also developing. After the fall of the dictatorship and following the turbulence of the 1990s, especially under the authoritarian presidency of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the situation did begin to stabilize, with the center of gravity of culture and literature shifting from diasporic networks back to Haiti itself.

The full development of a thriving literary community was hampered by difficulties of the economic situation and limited possibilities of the domestic cultural market, despite the fact that the institutional framework remains solid. The Rex Theatre, the theatre hall of the French Institute, along with many small venues serve the development of theatre. The National Library and the library of the French Institute are linked to a network of public libraries, notably the FOKAL association (Fondation Connaissance et Liberté / Fondasyon Konesans Ak Libète / Foundation for Knowledge and Liberty), founded in 1995, as well as to religious organizations. Outside the capital of Port-au-Prince, the library network of CLACs (Centers de lecture et d'animation / Centers for reading and animation) is available as well as private initiatives such as the Soleil library of the novelist Pierre Clitandre and the library of the poet Georges Castera (1936-2020).

The publishing and literary culture in Haiti remains underdeveloped, as is the infrastructure. Authors who write professionally, even world-renowned writers such as Dany Laferrière, continue to publish almost exclusively in Montreal or in France. Books published in Haiti are largely financed by the authors themselves. The writer's position thus corresponds to the peripheral communal situation and the weak, non-hierarchical axiological structuring of the literary field of the periphery (see above p. XXX). As in the past, literary production endures primarily as a kind of parallel activity for writers along with subsistence employment in the sectors such as the military, education, administration, health sectors, magazine editing, and radio. This, however, does not detract from the quality and number of publications, which currently amounts to two hundred titles a year. Publishing houses include Éditions du Soleil and Choucouné, founded in 1970 by the poet Christophe Charles; Deschamps, which Yanick Lahens managed in the 1990s; and Mémoire, eventually brought to Montreal by Rodney Saint-Eloi under the name Mémoire d'encrier. In 2004, Édouard Willems founded the Presses nationales d'Haïti intending to gradually publish all the classics of Haitian literature, including the integration and domiciliation of authors in exile. In addition to literary publishers, important didactic publishers are in operation such as Éditions de l'Université d'État d'Haïti, Éditions de l'Université Caraïbe, Editha, Zemès, and Arytos. Significantly, university publishers focus on criticism and theory and thus partly fulfill a consecratory function. If domestic Haitian authors and publishers are added to Haitians literarians abroad, whether in France (Actes Sud, Seuil, Gallimard, Laffont, Grasset, etc.), in Quebec (Mémoire d'encrier, CIDHICA, Triptyque, etc.) or in the United States (Soho Press, Alfred A. Knopf), the wide-ranging network of relations between Europe, America and the Haitian center that has characterized Haitian literature from the beginning, becomes evident. The Haitian culture continues to remain what it has always been – insular yet open to the world.