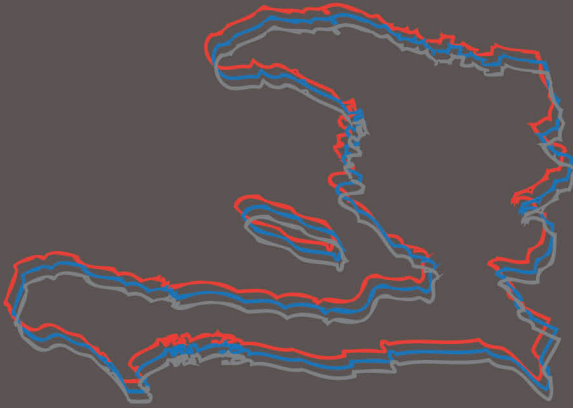


HOW TO WRITE AN EARTHQUAKE

COMMENT ÉCRIRE
ET QUOI ÉCRIRE

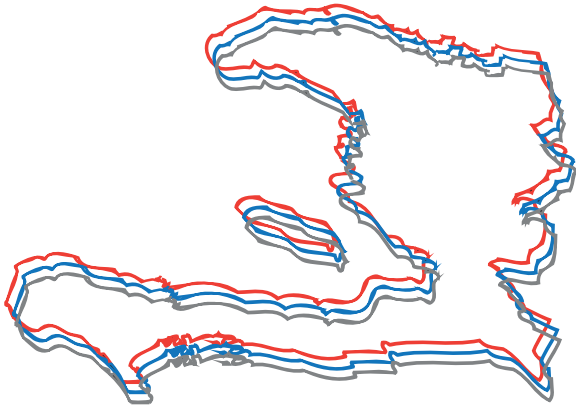
MO POU 12 JANVYE



FIFTEEN HAITIAN WRITERS RESPOND
QUINZE ÉCRIVAINS HAÏTIENS PARLENT
KENZ EKRIVEN AYISYEN REPONN

EDITED BY BEAUDELAINÉ PIERRE
AND NATAŠA ĐUROVIČOVÁ

91ST
M
BOOKS



**HOW TO WRITE AN EARTHQUAKE/COMMENT ÉCRIRE ET QUOI
ÉCRIRE/MOU POU 12 JANVYE**

Ed. Beudelaine Pierre and Nataša Ďurovičová

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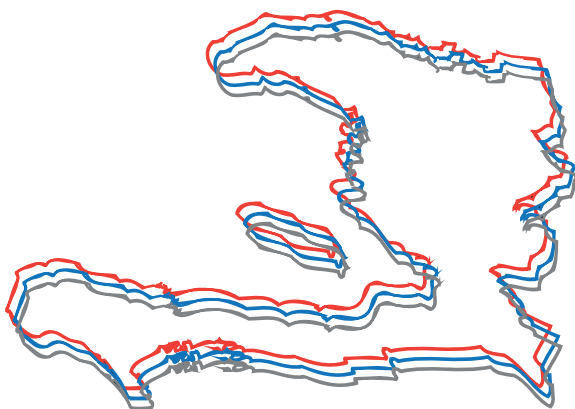
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MO POU 12 JANVYE

HOW TO WRITE
AN EARTHQUAKE

Originaux en Français, en
Créole et Anglais

Originals in French, Creole
& English

Orijinal an Franse an Kreyòl
ak an Angle

English

Originals & Translations

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EDITORS' NOTE

The texts we solicited from the contributors arrived in three languages, Creole, French and English, reflecting—as Joëlle Vitiello underscores in her introduction—the linguistic and political realities of Haitian writing today. To mark our commitment to these realities, this edition gives priority to the original texts. The English translations then follow in the second part of the volume. In the e-edition of this book this matter is, fortunately, moot, as the reader can herself choose the reading sequence.

BP + NĐ

BEAUDELAINÉ PIERRE

PRÉFACE

Comment écrire et quoi écrire. Voici une collection de textes d'écrivains et de poètes Haïtiens présentant le tremblement de terre du 12 janvier 2010 en Haïti, tel que vécu par eux. Le volume doit son titre à la romancière Yanick Lahens dans sa réflexion sur le rôle de l'écrivain, comme artisan de l'histoire.

Le projet démarre au lendemain du tremblement de terre. A l'initiative de l'International Writing Program en Iowa (USA), environ une douzaine d'écrivains et de poètes Haïtiens ont répondu à l'appel et ont osé. Ils ont, en dépit de tout et, de manière délibérée, tenté de mettre des mots sur la démesure et l'insaisissable. Car comment écrire le 12 janvier? Comment mettre des mots sur ce qui dépasse? Comment et pourquoi tenter l'entreprise douloureuse de tirer de l'oubli des matériaux à offrir à l'identité collective?

1

Nous avons réuni dans ce volume des mots. Rien que de mots. Avec l'espoir que ces mots mis ensemble donneront à nous-mêmes et à ceux après-nous, un sens de ce que nous sommes, et de ce qui nous unit désormais. Car comment ne pas écrire? L'écrivain, n'a-t-il pas lui aussi sa place dans la reconstruction?

En contribuant à la littérature déjà désormais établie du 12 janvier 2010, les contributeurs de cette collection affirment et recréent encore une fois le rôle sacré de la littérature dans la construction de la mémoire identitaire. Car en dépit de la douleur qui transforme les sanglots en giclée de sang et des souvenirs qui arrachent un à un les boyaux, la plume ne se reposera guère; ni la parole ne se taira. Les auteurs de ce volume comprennent bien que quoiqu'il arrive, il faudra à nous tous, fils et filles d'Haïti, ainsi qu'aux générations futures, nous construire et nous reconstruire par le sens que nous avons de la mémoire et de notre passé.

C'est qu'aussi, la littérature haïtienne s'est longtemps nourrie de nos malheurs et de nos défis. Elle a, pendant longtemps, charrié nos espoirs et construit, entre les pages d'un livre ou sur les planchers d'un podium, un pays dont les fils et les filles soupirent tous après.

C'est donc l'espérance d'une autre Haïti, pour tout de bon reconstruite que le lecteur lira également dans les lignes de ce volume. Le tremblement de terre du 12 janvier est narré à travers des thèmes aussi profonds que variés, allant du celui du désespoir personnel à celui de la solidarité internationale déployée dans le contexte de cette tragédie. Ces mots mis ensemble offrent au lecteur la vision d'une communauté haïtienne à venir.

La plupart de nos contributeurs vivent en Haïti; d'autres sont de la diaspora haïtienne aux Etats-Unis et au Canada. Certains titres originaux ont été écrits en Créole, d'autres en Français et en Anglais. Les auteurs du volume sont néanmoins unis par le fait d'avoir été détruits en partie ou en entier par le tremblement de terre du 12 janvier 2010 et par l'appel déchirant à donner un sens à la mémoire. Nous les remercions chaleureusement pour leur contribution.

Un merci spécial également aux traducteurs qui ont travaillé à rendre disponible les textes au lecteur anglophone. Et à Joëlle Vitiello, notre plus profonde gratitude pour avoir introduit ce volume et aider le lecteur à se construire un autre sens de l'après 12 janvier à travers la plume de nos auteurs.

Comment écrire et quoi écrire pour signifier tout simplement, qu'aujourd'hui encore, il nous faut les mots et la plume pour dire, nourrir et construire l'espoir d'une Haïti debout.

JOËLLE VITIELLO

INTRODUCTION

How to Write an Earthquake/Comment écrire/Mou pou 12 Janvye is a literary response to the January 12 earthquake that took so many lives in Port-au-Prince and the southern coastal towns of Haiti. For several weeks after the quake, Haiti was at the center of the world, a world that expressed great solidarity with the survivors and heard, perhaps for the first time, the dignified heartbeat of the island, with its history, its challenges and convulsions, and its amazing culture. Over a year later, as the world has turned its voyeuristic attention to new tragedies and hopeful revolutions, this anthology brings back to our consciousness the freshness of the pain, the fears, the losses, the shocks and the aftershocks of the earth. The sounds of the roofs collapsing, the agonies of the departed, the hopes and anguishes of the survivors, the unrecognizable landscape with its fissures, its intimate smells, the novelty of the tent camps, and the calls to the gods are all evoked in the anthology, a poetical memorial to the dead (one role played by the arts, as Edwidge Danticat suggests in “Haiti: Bloodied, Shaken—and Beloved”) and a site of remembrance for the survivors.

3

The title of the anthology reflects the ethical question that each writer, each poet, each artist has confronted in the face of overwhelming catastrophes: what can I say? Of what use is writing? And as Yanick Lahens writes in her most recent book, *Faults*, “How to measure up to that tragedy” through writing? The thirty-five seconds the earth took to violently shake the land in its first spasm on 01/12/10 created a time border between a “before” and an “after” that defines all stories. Writing bridges the two times and provides a shelter for memory, individual and collective. Through poetry, fiction, and non-fiction, it traces the ethos of pain and care that affected everyone on the threshold of the fault line.

How to Write an Earthquake/Comment écrire/Mou pou 12 Janvye anthologizes texts written for the most part shortly after 01/12/10

by writers and poets who live in Haiti or its diaspora. It brings together different genres, generations, and languages (Creole, English, French). Some of the writers included are well known, but this anthology also introduces a new generation of Haitian writers whose remarkable talent gives an idea of the richness of contemporary Haitian culture and literature.

Haitian literature is indeed a very well-kept secret. Since its independence in 1804, Haiti has produced a vibrant, world-class literature that deserves to be recognized globally. The better known contemporary writers in the collection include Edwidge Danticat, who has shared her love for Haiti and its people with great discernment since the earthquake. “Haiti: Bloodied, Shaken—and Beloved” appeared immediately after the *terre tremblé* in *The Miami Herald*, and evokes the period of uncertainty, with its hopes and anguish. She has since written movingly in her most recent book of essays, *Create Dangerously*, about her losses, and more recently, in *The New Yorker*, about the mourning of the dead and the release of their souls, a year and a day after the earthquake. Others are known in translation, for instance Lyonel Trouillot, novelist and poet (*Street of Lost Footsteps* and *Children of Heroes*). Three books of short stories by Yanick Lahens have been recently collected and translated by Betty Wilson as *Aunt Rézia and the Spirits and Other Stories*.

4

Authors such as Trouillot and Lahens may be more familiar to francophone readers, as they were among those Haitian writers whose voices were heard in the days after the earthquake in French dailies, weekly magazines, and on French literary and humanitarian TV shows. But the majority of writers who wrote the moving poems and short prose in this anthology represent voices that are not well known in the West, even though each of them has already published novels, short stories and poetry in French or in Creole and is well known among Haitians. They have received prizes and awards for their work, and writing is their daily labor of love. It is a privilege to introduce their writing to a wider audience concerned with Haiti and Haitian culture, as each poet and writer shares with the readers a profound and intimate connection to the country.

Beudelaine Pierre is the author of two novels (one of them written in Creole), and a book of short stories. Dominique Batrville has published five volumes of poetry in French and Creole, a novel, five plays; he has written dozens of articles for the newspaper *Le Nouvelliste* and has acted in about ten films, including *Royal Bonbon*. Patrick Sylvain, Chenal Augustin, Valerie Deus, Gaspard Dorélien, and Fortetson Fénelon, are all published poets in Creole, French, and English (published in Montréal, Paris, and Boston in the case of Patrick Sylvain). Joël Lorquet is a famous singer, whose song “Pity for Haïti, Father,” was written just after the earthquake. The original, sung in Creole, is a moving cry chronicling the misfortunes of Ayiti. Raoul Altidor has published short stories with Mémoire d’encrier, a small publishing house in Montreal run by the Haitian poet Rodney Saint-Eloi, who works relentlessly to bring Haitian literature to the world. Among the authors published, Lucie Carmel Paul-Austin, beyond being a poet, has also been a Minister for Women’s Affairs and at a later date a Minister of Education. Claude Bernard Sérant writes for a young public and Joujou Turenne is a story-teller and performer. Many among the authors live in Haiti and are journalists there; some of them reported on the most painful aspects of the earthquake in its immediate aftermath.

5

While many books have appeared on Haiti and about the earthquake, from a variety of perspectives, and while several anthologies of writers, from Haiti and elsewhere, have been published in France and Montreal, this is the first anthology about the earthquake entirely by Haitian poets and novelists published in English. I happened to be in Port-au-Prince on January 12, 2010 and had landed just a few hours before the earthquake to participate in a literary TV show about Haitian literature, linked to a literary festival. During the first nights afterward, it was the poetry, the stories, the prayers, the songs of the *rara* bands and the drumming convoking the gods that sustained me spiritually, and allowed me, as a humble guest, to keep hearing Haiti’s heartbeat. I have read each text of this anthology in its original language and in English, and been moved by each.

The authors of *Mou pou 12 Janvye* keep the memory of Haiti alive, and beyond their individual differences, beyond all political affili-

ations, they have come together, as in the spirit of a poem I heard Jacques Roch read many years ago at my first visit to the Literary Fridays organized at the Université Caraïbes by Lyonel Trouillot: “All together we will rebuild Haïti.” The poem, accompanied by a gentle acoustic guitar, was then one of reconciliation and unity. Today, after the earthquake, the ongoing cholera epidemic, the indefinite duration of life in tent camps, the disappointments of the international community in spite of genuine global solidarity, and the general uncertainty about a democratically elected government, the narratives and the songs that tell the stories of the departed and the survivors are still very poignant and central, and remind us of the need for unity and forging forward together. Nou la! Nou ansanm!

RAOUL ALTIDOR

AMAYIDE

Li soti tou frèt anba gravwa, Amayide file sou yon pye pou al wè si se vre: Pitit fi li mouri. Se pa tann te, ayè m te wèl. Mistè monte bwa. Syèl la te sou. Tè salpèt. Tè grennen. Tè vire bò. Nan pwèn nè pou mare doulè. Bri souf k ap kase kònen, souke rasin van k ap soufflé toupatou. Dal beton vide. Katye Amayide se yon liy tonm abondonnen. Kapital la pise san. Gen dyare nan kalson l. Ata nan plim je l.

Sete grate tè, mete kò. Lodè kadav ap swente sou lalin ak solèy. Lè a lou pase sak sèl sèl bòdmè lakaye. Amayide prije pousyè. Li blese van disèt kote ak de ponyèt li. Gen rele nan pwèn reponn. Sekou nan soukous. Amayide al chwe anba yon tonèl sou plas Senpyè. “ Delage lavi!, pèse baraj!” se kri k ap pèse letanp.

Kamera brake tou kri sou vil la: rèl pou piyay. Pye koupe. Sere dan, mare ren. Imaj trepase. Mò vivan sou kabwa. Estrad kraze. Otorite mete yon bann mask figi fennen . Y ap mande ann angle. San se lajan. Menm koulè ak Kwa wouj. Sosis mare. O, O. ONG ak Leta se bèl pè zo. Lajounen, yo sonnen tankou vivi . Alanjelis, y ap bat lamezi nan menm badji. Yo konn longè maji k ap detounen lamàn anvan l tonbe. Ya pase lacho nan figi zonbi.. Ya koupe riban devan yon joupa ki poko wakle. Ya, ya, ya, ya...Pou konbyen tan? Kilè y ap peye? Se sa Amayide vle konnen.

Dife limen tou wouj nan twa pye dife. Anba toujou paka tyèd. Anlè kwit prèt pou boule. Reyalite sa a pa menm panche. Men chak fwa peyi a fè moso pa, wout bare, yo di l rive. Tout moun al wonfle sou yon bann sak sidorye pèdi koulè. Lè yo leve chak maten, yo jwenn yo pi lwen dèyè nan yon ran k ap vin pi long. Rekòmanse?

Amayide pa kriye pou manje ni goumen pou bokit dlo. L ap fè tant yo bouje, l ap lanse modòd entèdi jiskaske fòs miltinasyonal la vin arete l. Amayide mouri toufe, tou touni, anba vant yon sòlda ki t ap fòse koupe l. Sete nan yon kan bò ayewopò a. Se fini.

BONEL AUGUSTE

ESPACE DISSOLU

J'ai toujours été suspendu
parmi les dieux furtifs
interpellant dans une voyance
de terre minée
les portes closes de l'espace dissolu
qui suscite pourtant l'incandescence
des signes cabalistiques
au seuil des quatre itinéraires
du grand voyage

Sous l'insolence de la soif
l'eau fait de son étanchement
un long sillage
d'araignées venimeuses
un cheminement de métaux
qui geignent

Dans l'élévation crayeuse du levain
le pain est une bouchée d'écartèlement

Mon gland est le seul œil par lequel je lorgne
ma part du monde
mon égalité avec les hommes

CHENALD AUGUSTIN

LA TERRE SUSPEND SA RONDE DE PAPILLON

La terre se met en colère
Des centaines de milliers de fleurs
A peine écloses
Sont étranglées
Entre les larves dévoreuses de la terre

La terre a hurlé au point que des étoiles
Deviennent cendres
Coulant sur un fleuve rouge de sang

Le soleil est allé se coucher
Avec des décombres et des taches de sang dans la gorge

10

Port-au-Prince, Jacmel, Léogâne, Petit-Goâve
Des cimetières à ciel ouvert
Des silences ensanglantés

Les rues désertes
Les maisons closes
Les enfants jouent avec leurs ombres affamées
Un oiseau crucifie l'odeur des villes mortes à l'horizon

Port-au-Prince, Jacmel, Léogâne, Petit-Goâve
Des cimetières à ciel ouvert
Des silences ensanglantés

DOMINIQUE BATRAVILLE

35 SECONDES ENTRE CRAINTES ET TREMBLEMENTS

Ce mardi peu ordinaire et quelque part apocalyptique
me revient comme la vision des incirconcis de la lune
Un si triste mardi soir se rapporte-t-il au calendrier maya?

Craintes et tremblements!

J'entends encore les galops des chevaux de la mort
Je revois la face dure de Baron-Lacroix
Je capte les cris des agonisants
Et je croise les regard des Gorgones.

Les quatre fantassins de Saint-Jean
aiment-ils encore besoin des semences d'aurore
d'un pays aux matins d'anges bleus?
Comtempleront-ils encore nos vitraux
et nos muraux christiques?

11

Craintes
Et puis, tremblements
Craintes, craintes suite aux effets sismiques
Merci Bondieu.
Merci aux Invisibles.
Encore une rasade de rhum Barbancourt
pour veiller sur le pays.

Lazarre n'est pas mort.
Lazarre vient de sortir des entrailles de la terre.
Mourir prisonnier des mastodontes
est aussi violent que le naufrage du Titanic.

Revoir le devant-jour
un mercredi 13

se vit comme le Dimanche des Rameaux
sans les craintes de la veille
et les fracas du 7.03, made in Richter!

Faudra-t-il retenir en otage
le merveilleux cheval de Saint-Jacques Majeur?
A qui la faute?
Au centaure de Dessalines
ou est-ce au regard hautain, trop hautain
du Marron reconnu?

Tout comme n'importe quel ange bleu
Je me replonge dans ces deux songes de 35 secondes
Deux annonces du tremblement de terre
dans mon lit de Balthazar des Tropiques
Deux songes pour apporter aux uns
craintes et inspirer aux autres tremblements.

12

Craintes devant la chute d'un Palais
construit pour des pantins.
Tremblements et lamentations
au passage des camions remplis de cadavres.
Tremblements des enfants sans pain.
Tremblements des veuves pour un gobelet d'eau.
Tremblements des chapeaux de carnaval
Tremblements des temples du Bondieu!

Le carnaval s'annonce pour la semaine des quatre jeudis
Tremblements et gloussements de plaisir
pour de si jolies tentes...
Tonnerre-foudre
Foudre-tonnerre
en ce sale temps de catastrophes naturelles!

Craintes et tremblements!

Mes nuits se feront d'eau pure
et de pains sans levain
J'aurai la science d'anciens boulangers
pour nourrir ceux et celles que je regarderai droit dans les yeux
avec encore des contraintes assez personnelles:
craintes et tremblements.

EDWIDGE DANTICAT

HAITI: BLOODIED, SHAKEN—AND BELOVED

(*Miami Herald*, January 17, 2010)

Haitians like to say that Haiti is *tè grave, glise*, slippery ground. Even under the best of circumstances, the country can be stable one moment, then crumbling the next. Haiti has never been more slippery ground than it is right now. Bodies littering the streets. Entire communities buried in rubble. Homes pancaked to dust.

For those of us who know and love Haiti, now our hearts are also slippery ground. We are hopeful one moment then filled with despair the next. Has 200 years of existence finally reached its abyss, we wonder? But now even the ground is no more.

14

Our love has not changed. In fact it is even deeper. But Haiti, or what is left of it, has changed. It has changed physically, earthquake fault lines catastrophically rearranging its landscape. The mountains that have been stripped of their trees and mined for construction materials then crowded with unsteady homes have crumbled, leaving both the poor and the rich homeless.

This is a natural disaster, but one that has been in the making for a long time. In part due to neglectful and even vicious import-favoring agricultural policies that have driven Haitians off their land into a city built for 200,000 that was forced to house nearly three million. If a tropical storm can bury an entire city under water as tropical storm Jeanne did to Gonaïves five years ago, if a mudslide can bring down entire neighborhoods as many have on a regular basis, then what chance did Port-au-Prince have with a 7.0 earthquake? Not to mention the aftershocks that may continue for months. “The ground keeps shaking,” one, thankfully fine, friend told us from Carrefour, the epicenter. “The ground keeps shaking.”

AN UNFAIR SHARE

Haiti has gotten more than its share of attention since the earthquake this past week. We who know and love Haiti have long been pained, and sometimes frustrated, that it's a place that can only be noticed when it is on its knees. Still no one is more grateful than I for all this attention as I await news from loved ones.

From my cousin Maxo, who had recently returned to Haiti to continue the work of his father, my uncle Joseph, a minister who had died here in Miami in the custody of the Department of Homeland Security five years ago.

From my aunt Rezia, who, when I was diagnosed with tuberculosis as a young girl, was the only person who kissed me on my face anyway.

From my cousin Fritzner, who ran for mayor in Delmas.

From my artist friend Jhon Charles, whom my husband and I hosted in our home during Art Basel and who at the time told the *Miami Herald's* Lydia Martin, in Haitian art, we use whatever materials we can find. But walking around the fairs, I was amazed at how many materials artists from other parts of the world have. I see all endless possibilities now.

I live and breathe every moment hoping to hear from them and literally hundreds of other people whom I cannot imagine my life without.

LOOKING LISTENING

Watching the news and seeing the desperate, hungry crowds, I look for their faces. In those assembled outside to sleep, I look for their shapes. Over the sound bites on Haitian radio stations, I listen for their voices. Seeing wounded children wandering the streets alone, I see my daughters. I see myself.

Still I am grateful. I am grateful, even if prematurely and perhaps wrongly, at the possibility of their survival. I am grateful for every country in the world that has offered the help that might make it possible. I am grateful for every dollar that's been donated. But even as I am grateful I am also fearful. With so many people sleeping outside, I am fearful of the first rain. I am fearful for the looming specter of food shortages and contaminated soil and airborne diseases from disintegrating bodies. I am fearful that this won't make for dramatic television anymore and all the care and attention that is being given to Haiti now will go away.

Haiti needs, and will continue to need, the kind of love and commitment that is not slippery. It needs our attention and care now, but it will also need it months, years, and perhaps decades from now. Haitians are resilient.

We will do our part. However, Haiti's friends and neighbors must remain as attentive and committed to it in the long run as they are now. Only then can Haiti not only rise, but remain out of the abyss. And above what is now, with corpses in every corner of every street, not just slippery ground, but sacred ground.

VALERIE DEUS

HAITI UNFINISHED

It's 4:30am and I can't write this poem
it's supposed to be about you buying carrots
but I wanna make popcorn and it's raining this morning

I want to write you another note about
feeling like a jack-o'-lantern hollow with
the seeds and threads missing
with the soup and the guts gone
there's no independence day long enough
or revolution deep enough to save me
from writing a poem about watching *novelas* with your mother
while drinking tea
or picking hazelnuts in her backyard

that would be our weird shadow poem
hiding behind
wanting to write about you going to church
and how little girls' patent leather shoes
those black shiny shells
those little girl church shoes
look like those big black beetles that make awful noises in the summer
Toussaint—do you hear them up there?
crunching like conch shell suppers

they seem spacious almost
the shoes round and hollow-mouthed
with all the mamas and the buzzing
and the praying built in
except for the catholic stuff
all the kneeling and confession
you can almost see the guilt
that doesn't seem as spacious or barely a sunflower

17

but once it was—a sunflower
or was it an island
of bright lights
of syrup smells
fried banana yellow sunshine
heavy and heavy
with wild flowers which grew upon its breast
the beautiful nude with white cassava sands
is now brown shoe worn and forgotten
smiles with teeth put away
like breath put away
and saved for less brutal times
less careless times

Why have you forgotten you?
the you of brown feet and spine sweat

18 Toussaint why eat dinner alone?
you crowd the plate and grumble in corduroy pants
about ungrateful beans
and too many grains of rice spoiling the plate
the world awaits your arrival
you'll face them alone wearing your hair and dancing
will you dance with me, sir golden slave?
will you shimmy into the night?
will you give me too much to drink?
will you touch me inappropriately and take advantage?

I sing you a song
and give you the skinny on the strange fruit
that grows on spacious southern trees
about waiting hours for the next erect minute
up north I become your island bride via Kings County
I sing you
you my immigrant song
my rebel tongue swoons your ear with borrowed eloquence
saddened you wonder where hope went with her promises

you peek around the corner with hunger

I read our love letters scribed by a misunderstood appetite
I question the caffeine in your words
your battled brown feet
and how they must ache today more than ever
they burn with village flood water

Are we going to ride all night?
In car 9B52
sway forth and back again
low swing of light
your cup trembles with each turn
we haven't seen bread in days and cook up bones
smile a wood smile for coins

Toussaint where are you?
the sink is leaking and the babies haven't been fed
and like me they wait and wait
They weep rivers run out of time
of pumpkin soup seeds and string that get caught mid throat
they dream of pulling the ocean at both ends
to end it all
all the looking over your shoulder and stealing your words

19

GASPARD DORELIEN

ELLE N'EST PAS VENUE D'EN HAUT

Vent froid
La grêle n'est pas venue d'en haut
Notre mort centenaire
Notre quotidien
Addition de survie
Il ne faut pas laisser le cœur trembloter
La terre
Singe téméraire
A égaré le sien
Vent glacial
La giboulée n'est pas tombée du ciel
Cause
Pour compter les morts
Les doigts ne suffisent plus
Là-bas
En Haïti
Les cœurs résonnaient le tam-tam
Percussion des premiers nègres
Effroi de la terre
Il ne faut pas laisser le cœur trembloter
La terre
Mégère de sangsue
A englouti nos maisons
Nos amours
Nos faux espoirs
La mort n'est pas venue avec la pluie
Pour compter les disparus
La mémoire ne suffit plus
Brise glacée
La tornade n'est pas du firmament
Désormais
Ici

En Haïti

La mort est un nombre pair

12

Il ne faut plus laisser le cœur trembloter

La terre a peur du tambour-battant

La mort est ennemie de tout tam-tam qui résonne.

FORTESTSON 'LOKANDYA' FENELON

SOU LENTO PÔT LA

Sou lento pôt la
tout ri yo kase randevou
nan lantre chanm la
pa gen nouvèl ki te anonse
sèl tè-a ki te konnen
pèsonn moun pat invite l

Li pase tankou volè
li kraze, li brize
pote ale tout edifis
gro lajounen
li pran manman, papa, sè, frè
kouzin, bèlsè ata zanmi
menm dlo nan je pat invite l

22

Bouch nou amè kou fyèl
se jou malè
se jou tè anvi bwè san
menm zansèt yo pa epanye
pèsonn pa janm entimite nan jou malè
pouki lè li fache li pran kontròl nou

Kèk segond aprè
li pati
kite nou toutouni
san pantalèt
intimate n, diyite n, pèdi nan lonbraj li
tout moun sanble
tout bèt sanble
lajounen ak lannwit sanble

Nou se ti bebe k ap fèk pouse dan
chak jou n ap chanje kouchèt
aswè a m fèt bandi
lè tè tranble se pou manman l ak papa l
m pap bay invitasyon
sou lento pòt la
souf latè anba pye m

HAÏTI LE 28 JANVIER 2010

Dès le mercredi 13 janvier 2010 j'ai commencé par tenir une chronique avec une simple comptabilité des faits et une description que je voulais la plus précise qui soit des dommages. Et bien sûr de la détresse. Celle lointaine d'inconnus croisés dans les rues, dans les abris, dans les centres hospitaliers et celle plus proche d'un voisin dont nous avons suivi impuissants, la lente agonie sous les gravats du Ministère de la Justice, celle de cette jeune femme que nous avons hébergée et qui tous les matins jusqu'à la tombée de la nuit se rendait à cet hôtel qui s'était effondré pour finalement repérer sous les décombres après dix jours le téléphone portable de son époux juste à coté de sa main puis son corps cinq jours plus tard.

24

J'ai commencé à le faire et il fallait le faire. Il y a un travail de mémoire qui passe inévitablement par ce regard sans cillement sur l'événement, seul gage de connaître un jour le nécessaire commencement de l'oubli. Question de se tenir à hauteur d'humanité sur cette crête précaire qui faisait dire à un personnage d' "Hiroshima mon amour" "Je suis douée de mémoire, je connais l'oubli." Et puis deux images sont venues me le confirmer en me rappelant de surcroît que mon rôle d'écrivain ne pouvait pas se résumer à une comptabilité macabre ou à une simple transcription mécanique des faits mais consistait à inventer un monde qui amplifie, prolonge ou fait résonner précisément celui-ci.

La première image est celle d'un enfant sorti des décombres, les bras levés au ciel, un sourire comme un fruit de saison et qui dit à sa mère "j'ai soif et j'ai faim." La deuxième est celle d'une jeune-fille aux abords d'un marché qui trois jours après le séisme se fait tresser les cheveux et se regarde dans un miroir. J'ai aimé ce garçon qui disait oui à la vie, qui faisait presque un pied de nez au malheur et regardait

l'avenir avec des soleils dans les yeux. Pour la deuxième image je me suis dit que quand les jeunes filles veulent encore être belles pour courir au devant du désir et des mots à fleur de peau, tout espoir ne peut être perdu. Tous deux me ramenaient à une vérité essentielle: ne pas célébrer la vie malgré tout, ne pas la transformer par l'art ou la littérature, c'est nous faire terrasser une deuxième fois par la catastrophe.

Cet événement si éprouvant soit-il n'est donc pas parvenu à éteindre l'écrivain en moi qui se pose aujourd'hui plus que jamais les questions suivantes: quoi écrire et comment écrire après une telle catastrophe?

Alors j'ai eu hâte de retrouver toutes ces sensations que je ne connais que trop bien devant ma feuille blanche et mon clavier. D'abord celle d'être en retard sur la vie. Toujours. Ensuite celle de vouloir tourner autour des mêmes interrogations comme dans une sarabande obstinée. En tentant d'y apporter des réponses quelques-unes de forme, d'autres de fond en sachant qu'à ces questions je n'apporterai que des réponses provisoires, appelées à se renouveler encore et encore. J'aime la force que cet acte requiert. Parce qu'écrire ce n'est pas seulement tracer des mots, "il faut être plus fort que soi pour aborder l'écriture, il faut être plus fort que ce qu'on écrit." J'essaie en ces jours difficiles d'accumuler un peu de cette force pour transcender l'événement et arriver de nouveau vers mes lecteurs avec des mots qui sauront les toucher comme des mains.

25

JOËL LORQUET

PITYE POU AYITI, PAPA!

Douz janvyè lane de mil dis
S on dat nou pape janm bliye.
Kèlke segond latè tranble,
Epi se dèy dezolasyon.

Yon pakèt kay te efondre,
Jou sa-a de san mil moun mouri,
Sa ki te rich vin tounen pòv,
Yo blige dòmi nan lari.

Pitye pou Ayiti Papa!
Pitye pou peyi nou!
Pou nou sispan konte kadav,
Pou Ayisyen sispann kriye,
Pou Ayiti ka pwogrese
Tankou sa fèt nan lòt peyi.

Peyi nou konn gen koudeta
Nou pase pre lagè sivil
Nou pran siklòn, inondasyon
Kounyè-a se tranbleman d'tè

Bondye, pouki tout tan se nou?
Nou konnen nou fè sak pa bon
Eske se yon malediksyon?
Se pou sa nap mandew padon.

Padon pou Ayiti Papa!

LUCIE CARMEL PAUL-AUSTIN

TORPEUR (NY, 14 JANVIER)

Immobile, terrassée,
Je respire avec peine, le souffle lent.
Je mesure l'espace parcouru,
Le passé, où rien ne résiste...
Le jour ne se lève
Et déjà, le regard fatigué, embué,
J'efface. Je gomme. J'oublie.

Immobile, clouée au sol, sur ma terre,
Je ne sais où aller, courir, me cacher.
Abasourdie, muette, mon âme s'étire devant moi,
Je la vois glisser, comme une feuille sur l'eau,
Je reste figée.
Immobile, consciente de l'effroi qui me gagne
J'espère encore une rédemption

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Immobile, fixée, alourdie
J'accueille le jour naissant,
Renouvelant mon amertume, mon angoisse, ma peur
Ma hargne et ma torpeur...
Nos enfants, nos filles, surtout
Ils ratissent, paissent, et dévorent
Comme ils veulent

Immobile, raide, j'attends que vienne mon heure,
Heure de la démesure, de l'approximation,
L'heure fixe, présente, immobile, tenace

LUCIE CARMEL PAUL-AUSTIN

ETAT SECOND (NY, 14 JANVIER)

Il ne reste plus qu'à ranger mes livres,
Et mes notes
Mon stylo ne sert plus,
Aussi sec que les larmes de mes yeux.
Vu, entendu, concédé!
Je ris maintenant, à gorges rauques,
Je ne souffre plus de dormir
Ou de rester éveillée.
O vigie, t'as encore l'œil ouvert? Sur quoi?
Ne me blâme pas, ni les dieux non plus!
Qu'il crève! Je n'y peux rien.
Etat des choses, Droit d'exister.
J'ai fini par trouver la faille salutaire
Pour m'abriter
En toute sécurité. J'y demeure
Les paupières libres.

LUCIE CARMEL PAUL-AUSTIN

J'AI OSÉ (PAP, 29 MARS: PREMIER JOUR)

J'ai osé... J'ai mordu la poussière et les yeux rougis, à la fois de honte, d'amertume et d'angoisse. Je me suis couchée. Je ne désire point rêver cette nuit, car il fera trop sombre. Trop lourd aussi. Recommencer et surtout ne pas défier l'humeur du temps...

Je suis ce que je suis. Je ne veux rien d'autre que de pouvoir effacer cette terrible douleur qui me fend la poitrine et le cœur. Je ne désire rien d'autre que de rayer de ma mémoire cette sensation de vide et d'inconstance. Je veux y arriver. Je le ferai demain, j'en suis certaine, mais maintenant, je suis toute souffrance, toute douleur, toute confusion et j'ai surtout mal.

LUCIE CARMEL PAUL-AUSTIN

REFUGE/ABRI (PAP, 2 AVRIL)

Je possède ce lieu
De repos, de paix intérieure,
En moi et dans ma maison.
En un lieu, je demeure,
Dans ce sanctuaire insoupçonné...
Où j'ai fini par abandonner
Sans regret ni amertume
Ceux et celles dont le visage s'estompe
De plus en plus dans ma mémoire,
De mes sens, dans ma tête.

30 J'ai revu sans anticipation les rues,
Les couloirs et les allées, les mornes,
Alors que je m'abritais, sans heurt ni crainte
Dans cette bulle d'air chaud, sombre et poussiéreux.
Sans confort ni protestation,
Ce lieu m'habite.
Malgré moi,
Malgré le temps.

BEAUDELAINÉ PIERRE

QUAND MON SOLEIL SE LÈVERA

J'ai ouvert mes deux jambes et, à mes pieds, les dieux, les esprits et les loas se sont confondus dans l'alléluia d'un fidèle aux milles visages. J'ai fléchi sous le joug de la douleur, muette et désinvolte. J'ai valsé sous les ailes de la brise ensorcelante et offert mes deux seins aux raileries du vent. Je hoquetai. Je suai. J'aboyai. Je poussai, râlai, gémis. Pliée mais non vaincue; affaiblie, mais non terrassée. Un spasme violent et douloureux, comme la crotte dure, rebelle et capricieuse qui finit pourtant par évacuer les tripes. Ainsi, tu vins et déclara la guerre au soleil. Comme bien d'autres, tu poussas, toi aussi, ce cri de victoire sur la vie. Comment donc ne pas croire en toutes les promesses et oser espérer contre toute espérance? En mon cœur, plus profond que le couteau pénétrant le giraumon, germa la pensée que le fils fera la gloire de la mère. J'aimai comme jamais.

31

De toute la race, mon fils, tu fus le plus hardi. Je te vois faire tes premiers pas sous le soleil, au milieu de tes cousins, si différents de toi, mais si semblables aussi. J'aime en toi cette couleur par laquelle on te reconnaît fils de ta mère. Cette couleur qui fait dire à tes cousins, combien on se ressemble, toi et moi. Ou combien on n'est si différent d'eux. Cette couleur au nom de laquelle nos frères nous ont longtemps assujettis, ton père et moi. Nous en rions tous les deux, de douleur et d'espérance. Tu es venu, nos chaînes se sont brisées et nos langues se sont déliées. Le sirop bouillant de la canne que l'on déversait sur tes pieds n'ont pas su ralentir ta course. Les fourmis folles qui te mangeaient, le soir, les chevilles et les oreilles et rentraient jusque sous ton pagne, à l'intérieur de toi, n'ont pas eu raison de toi. On te fit manchot. On t'estropia. Tu connus même la mort. Mais tu renaissais encore toujours plus toi, toujours plus déterminé à trouver ta place sous le ciel. Alors nous nous interrogeons tous, ébahis, sur celui-là qui ose même défier le soleil dans sa course. Quant à moi, je te ressassais constamment en mon cœur. Tu m'habitais comme l'eau trouve sa place dans la terre sèche. J'ai su tout simplement, en te regardant, mon fils, que le moment était venu pour nous.

Te souviens-tu de notre promenade à l'aube de la journée qui succéda ta grande dispute avec tes cousins? Nous prenions, silencieux, le chemin menant vers les grandes plantations de la côte nord. L'air sentait le brûlé et sur ton enveloppe de Nègre, les débris volant des feuilles et des arbres calcinés trouvaient bien un refuge. Je regardais ce fils-là qui allait sur son territoire, la tête haute et les épaules jamais courbées. Je voyais alors ma tête se gonfler d'orgueil. Hier encore tu mettais en déroute les plus puissants de tes cousins. Tu n'as jamais cessé de leur dire, que tu es le cheval qu'on ne peut dompter, la bourrasque qu'on ne peut arrêter sur son chemin. Eux-mêmes, savaient que l'inévitable se produirait. Tu le leur as prouvé. Pour la première fois, moi, Ayiti, Bohio, Quisqueya, je me sentais moi; je renaissais dans mes entrailles. Mon esprit s'en allait bien loin bien loin. Je me voyais en Reine Anacaona. Je retrouvais l'Afrique et ses contes du soir; mon gosier recevait goulument le délicieux Saka-Saka qui emplissait nos palais jadis. Chaque pas nous rapprochait davantage de nos racines et en mon cœur je répétais incessamment, que nos dieux soient bénis.

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Dois-je te dire que plus heureuse que moi, à cette époque, j'en connais pas? De mes entrailles sortaient le café, le cacao en abondance. Je fécondais à n'en plus finir. J'étais la terre aride et desséchée qui se venge d'avoir été tenue trop longtemps stérile, et qui découvre subitement sa fertilité. Alors je me donnais. Je me donnais sans répit. Je n'avais d'existence qu'en cela. T'en souviens-tu? Je m'épanouissais dans toute ma verdure. Et le vent et le soleil, pluie, orages et grêle, ont chacun, un jour, trouvé refuge à l'ombre de mes ailes. Le bruit de ma prospérité se répandit jusque dans les contrées habitées par nos cousins. Toi, mon fils, tu allais vers quelques-uns d'entre eux et leur offrais gracieusement le fruit d'une liberté arrachée dans la violence et dans le sang. On t'appela l'effronté, celui qui pette plus haut que le bout de son nez. Certains de tes cousins ont délibérément marché sur tes traces. D'autres ont juré de te faire payer, cher, ton effronterie. C'est alors que mon calvaire commença et que mes boyaux s'arrachèrent de moi peu à peu. Plus malheureuse que moi, il n'y en a pas.

Tu n'as pas vu venir le malheur. Tu étais trop occupé à afficher ton orgueil de Nègre libre. Tu étais si fier d'avoir porté en ton sein les germes de la liberté que tu oubliais que le beau temps succède à la pluie, tout comme la pluie succède au beau temps. Tu as même oublié tes racines. Tu as maudit et rejeté tes propres entrailles, ceux-là mêmes qui ont combattu avec toi pour la liberté de ta race. Tu es allé vers tes cousins. Tu les as appelés, "frères"; et tu disais de tes propres frères "étrangers!" Tu trouvas ta gloire à t'asseoir avec l'autre et ton bonheur à lui ressembler. A être plus lui que lui. Cela se fit à petit feu. Toi et moi, nous allâmes de déclin en déclin. Puis vint le vent de la division. Tu t'en allas loin de moi et je sus que je ne résisterais pas. J'appelai alors à ton génie. Tu ne m'as compris. Tu ne parlais plus la langue de ta mère. Je t'ai supplié comme jamais de revenir vers moi. Mais tu étais bien loin, occupé à nourrir d'autres seins. Tu brillais de toute ta flamme sous la chaleur d'autres mamelles qui ont su, mieux que je n'aurais pu le faire, t'ouvrir les portes du monde. En dépit de tout, mon cœur se bondait encore plus d'amour et de fierté en te voyant faire le bonheur des autres. Je n'ai jamais cessé de chanter tes louanges. Je n'ai jamais manqué de dire combien tes racines en moi sont profondes. Ce fut mon unique consolation. Mais je sus désormais que j'étais perdue, destinée au néant.

Il nous arrive à tous d'être réduit un jour au néant. De nous retrouver brusquement envelopper dans les plis de son jupon. Peut-être, est-ce cela qui m'arrivait. Ce doit être mon destin, ne pas voir s'élever mes entrailles sous la coupe du soleil. Peut-être ne suis-je qu'une terre maudite, appelée à voir ses os se dessécher un à un. Il y en a ceux dont le mal les précède. Peut-être suis-je de ceux-là. Dès le ventre de ma mère, j'étais sans doute destinée à voir le fruit de mes seins renié le ventre qui l'a fait naître. Mon enveloppe que je croyais ma force, porterait-elle l'odeur de la mort? On me donna pour nom bête de somme, bois d'ébène. On m'appela la honte de l'humanité. Mais quel a été mon crime? Le sais-tu mon fils? De quoi me condamnera-t-on? Même mes dieux se sont détournés de moi? Ce fouet qui me frappe de la tête aux pieds, la nature contre moi l'a brandi, elle aussi. Je reçus coup de couteau sur coup de couteau. Je me relevais pourtant ensuite. Leur déluge me prenait souvent, le soir, par surprise. Le matin suiv-

ant, on me retrouvait toujours, debout à l'aube, chauffant ma pipe et grillant mon café.

Car la nature, en dépit de tout, me faisait mes propres armes. Combien de fois ont-ils cru m'avoir? Dépités, ils m'ont appelé potomitan; ma force et ma résistance m'ont valu d'être surnommée, fanm vanyan. 1804 passa. 1915 aussi. Mais 2010, ce fut un choc. Pendant des secondes qui me parurent une éternité, je fus accueilli dans les profondeurs de la mort pour expier je ne sais quel péché. Mes regards se sont tournés vers le néant. Je lui dis, il n'est pas encore temps. Alors, je râlai, je criai comme jamais. La mort n'aurait pas raison de moi. Ce sera la dernière bataille.

J'y ai laissé plus de la moitié de tes frères et sœurs. Mes entrailles sont tombées par milliers. On me laissa manchot, estropiée. Tes sœurs et tes frères que j'ai portés et nourris au sein succombèrent, impuissants, sous la force des ouragans et du vent. L'eau et le feu m'ont frappé à droite et à gauche. Comme si j'étais un san manman. J'ai plié. Comme le roseau. Mais mon dos ne s'est pas rompu. Et si mon ventre a tremblé et que beaucoup de mes fils et de mes filles se sont allés, mon regard se tourne encore vers le néant. Il n'est pas encore temps.

C'est à partir de ce moment-là qu'ils me virent réellement en fanm vanyan. Comment comprendre un tel héroïsme devant la mort? Alors, j'ai vu venir à mon secours, tes cousins des quatre coins de la planète. Je devenais encore une fois le centre du monde. J'ai alors compris la puissance d'aimer. Mais je n'ai pu m'empêcher de les regarder faire dans une sorte de concours où les plus puissants s'érigeaient en tuteur. C'est le droit d'ingérence et non à l'indifférence. L'humanitaire? Une flotte. Mais vois-tu mon fils, je regarde ce qui m'arrive et j'en retire de grandes satisfactions. Ne dit-on pas toujours que c'est dans le malheur que l'on reconnaît les vrais amis?

Regarde Dominique, ma voisine. Quand les flots du vent m'ont poussé au fin fonds de l'abîme, elle a été la première à tendre la main vers moi. Même si elle et moi, nous avons connu une longue histoire de querelles et de haines réciproques, je nous regarde tous les deux et je

me dis que ma relation avec Dominique ne sera plus jamais ce qu'elle a été par le passé. Regarde aussi la bonté de cœur de cousine Ueba. Pour apaiser la douleur de mon ventre, elle a donné le passage, sur sa terre à cousine Amerida, sa plus farouche adversaire, pour que celle-ci puisse voler rapidement à mon secours. Mais je crois que le plus surprenant de tous a été l'attitude de cousine Francesse à mon égard. D'entre tous tes cousins et tes cousines, elle a été la plus meurtrière par le passé. La plus distante aussi. En ce moment de deuil, elle s'est parée de ses plus beaux atours et m'a fait une visite que je ne suis pas près d'oublier. Étonnant n'est-ce pas? Nous avons tous célébré la vie devant la mort et oublié des querelles si minutieusement construites.

Ainsi mon fils, des pensées me viennent comme ça. Du plus profond de mon être, j'entends cette voix, l'écho de mes racines qui s'érige contre le néant. La fleur ne s'éteint-elle pas le soir pour s'ouvrir de plus belle le lendemain face au soleil? Qui ne meurt pas pour renaître? Je garde ainsi l'espoir que demain mes jours seront meilleurs. Mais je t'en prie, reviens vers ta mère. Je n'ai jamais eu autant besoin de toi. Et malgré toute ma force de vivre, si tu m'abandonnes, je sais que je ne survivrai pas. De qui serais-je la mère? N'es-tu pas tout pour moi? J'ai mis ma ceinture à mon ventre et sur ma tête, mon mouchoir à trois pointes. J'ai bouilli mon café depuis l'aube et rempli mon pain de mamba. Je me tiens sous le linteau de la porte. J'attends que mon soleil se lève.

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CLAUDE BERNARD SÉRANT

UNE AMPUTATION MAL DIGÉRÉE

Moïse, 4 ans. Ce petit garçon au regard vif a eu la malchance d'être au mauvais endroit et au mauvais moment, le 12 janvier, jour du tremblement de terre qui a ravagé Port-au-Prince, la ville où il est né. Malchance: Moïse a été amputé de la jambe gauche par des médecins américains dépêchés au Centre de traitement intégré (CDTI) à Turgeau, deux semaines après avoir traîné sa blessure d'un hôpital à l'autre.

Assis entre ses parents, sur un banc placé au bout de la rue, Moïse joue avec l'écouteur d'un téléphone portable. A peine me suis-je approché de lui, qu'il se blottit contre sa mère. C'est la première fois que j'avais remarqué ces nouveaux visages parmi tant d'autres qui venaient élire domicile dans la rue où j'habite dans le quartier de Bourdon.

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«Tu vois ce qui est arrivé à mon fils. Il a perdu sa jambe pour rien», me dit, la voix triste, le visage terne, madame Métellus, la mère de l'enfant. En entendant claquer ces mots, Métellus prend sa tête à deux mains et la comprime.

Madame Métellus était devenue une bouche à paroles qui avait besoin d'une oreille attentive pour s'épancher. «Quand la terre a commencé à tremblé, j'étais dans la rue. Mes deux enfants (Moïse, 4 ans et Sonel, 1 an 5 mois) étaient sous la garde d'une petite fille (une restavék de onze ans). La maison s'est effondrée. Sonel est resté sous les décombres. On l'a dégagé de là, sain et sauf, dans sa petite crèche, le lendemain à cinq heures du matin.»

Moïse a pu se sauver de la catastrophe ainsi que la petite domestique au service de la famille Métellus. Mais un bloc s'est détaché de la maison et a fendu la face dorsale du pied gauche de Moïse. Le soir même où des voix s'élèvent dans la cohue pour annoncer la fin du monde, on l'emmène à l'hôpital du Canapé Vert, à quelques pas de sa

maison. Dans cet hôpital privé, l’infirmière a cousu la peau du pied de mon enfant à la va vite avec tous les débris», dit-elle, navrée.

Les jours passent, les cadavres s’entassent le long des rues. C’est dans cette atmosphère que cette famille meurtrie étend ses draps et ses baluchons pour délimiter son aire de repos. Le temps de reprendre souffle dans cet enfer de l’odorat que devenait Port-au-Prince, la plaie du gosse s’était infectée. Une infirmière du quartier avec qui ils ont des liens d’amitié les conseille de se procurer des toiles de gaze pour panser la blessure de leur enfant.

Chauffeur de taxi de son état, faisant le trajet centre-ville et Canapé-Vert, Métellus avoue avoir remué Port-au-Prince pour trouver ces morceaux de tissu nécessaire. Les yeux voilés de larme, il dit: “Quand j’ai trouvé à un prix élevé cette bande de tissu, il était temps et ne valait rien puisqu’elle était insuffisante.»

La semaine est passée. Le couple emmène l’enfant à l’hôpital La paix, à Delmas. Médecins et infirmières sont débordés dans ce cadre sanitaire où se comptent blessés, mourants et morts. En un tour de main, on prodigue des soins de bas de gamme à Moïse. Au suivant!

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INTOLÉRABLE SOUFFRANCE

Les soins au pied levé administrés à l’enfant, ajouté à la lenteur des parents (lenteur: mot qui revient comme un reproche sur les lèvres de leurs compagnons d’infortune), n’ont fait qu’aggraver le cas de ce martyr. Le soir, Moïse hurle de douleur pendant que d’autres sinistrés pleurant leurs morts réclament la miséricorde divine à chaque réplique tellurique.

Les jours suivants, la souffrance de l’enfant devient intolérable. On le conduit dans un centre de santé de fortune établi sur une cour proche des ruines de l’église Saint Louis Roi de France (mis à sac par le violent séisme, 7.3 sur l’échelle de Richter). L’infirmière penchée sur le cas de Moïse apprendra au couple que le gros orteil de Moïse s’est complètement infecté. Avec un accent de regret, Madame Métellus

souligne: «Elle a pris soin de la blessure et a nous recommandés de poursuivre le traitement au CDTI».

Le même jour, le sort en était jeté “Mon mari a pris Moïse et il a accepté que l’on coupe le pied de mon enfant. Voilà ce qu’il a fait!», dit-elle en illustrant le fait accompli d’un geste désespéré de la main.

«Ah, femme! raconte les choses comme elles se sont passées réellement. Moïse n’est-il pas aussi mon enfant?», intervient Métellus.

«Regarde dans quel état tu as mis mon enfant! Bon Dieu, je ne pourrai pas supporter de voir mon garçon ainsi réduit», admet madame Métellus. «Manman, manman», supplie le petit Moïse. «Tu vas me rendre triste. Je préfère ne plus parler de cette histoire», se désole l’homme, les bras croisés, oscillant de tout son buste comme un balancier.

«Les médecins à Saint Louis Roi de France sont désolés quand ils ont appris cette nouvelle. Ils ne comprennent pas pourquoi ils ont fait ça à mon enfant. Pourquoi?», lâche-t-elle dans un cri de désespoir.

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Moïse continue de jouer avec son jouet. Perdu dans son monde, il a l’air de ne prêter aucune attention à la conversation des adultes. De temps à autre, il fait bouger de gauche à droite son pied valide.

Métellus, se retenant de pleurer, intervient après l’interrogation de sa femme. «Tu sais, mon fils m’a parlé. Je ne sais pas pourquoi. Il m’a dit, des jours avant qu’on l’ampute, papa, tu dois faire un autre Moïse. Le pied de ce Moïse là n’est pas bon. Je lui ai répondu, chéri, c’est ce Moïse là que je veux garder avec moi». Après une plage de silence, il ajoute: «Quand les médecins américains m’ont déclaré qu’ils allaient couper le pied de l’enfant, j’ai hurlé. Je ne me possédais plus.» Au pied du mur, il a accepté la proposition des médecins. «Ils m’ont convaincu que Moïse allait mourir si je ne prenais pas au plus vite cette décision. Ne t’avais-je pas dit cela? madame, n’avais-tu pas donné ton accord?»

A la fin du mois de janvier, Handicap International, une organisation humanitaire œuvrant sur le terrain, avait déclaré qu’il y avait

plus de 2000 amputés à la suite du meurtrier séisme qui a ravagé Port-au-Prince et quelques communes du département de l'Ouest. J'ai revu Moïse, à la mi-février, au bout de la même rue ensoleillée, sur le même banc en compagnie de sa mère et de son petit frère. Il jouait avec le même casque de téléphone portable qu'il tenait en main la première fois que je l'ai vu.

«Moïse, ton ami est venu te voir», dit sa maman. Le petit bout de chou ne répond pas et s'enfonce dans son mutisme habituel dès qu'un étranger lui adresse la parole. Mais à peine ai-je eu le dos tourné, je l'entends dire: «Manman où est le pied neuf que tu m'avais promis pour jouer au football?»

PATRICK SYLVAIN

ANJELIN PAK-AN-PAK

Anjelin te sonje jan avni Kristòf te ye pandan ane 1930 yo. Ford (Fòd) dezyèm-men konn ap fofile monte mòn yo epi klaksonnen tankou ti kana pou moun kouri sou balkon yo pou y'al gade lamayòt kat kawotchou sa a k'ap woule-pòtpòt nan wout kwense ki aliye ak bougenvila, choublak epi jasmen. Anjelin sonje fason limenm ak zanmi lekòl li yo te konn abiye avèk wòb koton long koulè krèm, epi chapo panach yo panche lèjèman sou yon bò. Yo te konn al fè pwomnad sou Channmas kote moun te ale la pou fè wè oubyen gade zounzoun ak "moun-de-byen" nan Pòtoprens. Anjelin te toujou lage yon kuipe repiyans chak fwa li te gade fason machann akwoupi tout arebò lari a, espesyalman anfas la kote Lefèy yo te abite; e se la tou, lè li te gen trèzan, li te premye bwè tas kafe dimanch li.

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A 85-an, Anjelin te santi l'chancez e byen beni ke li te toujou ap viv, menmlè mari li, Theodore (Teyodò), te lejèman distrè epi antyoutyout tankou yon ti toutous. Ansuit, li te 2 gran-gran pitit ki te fèk fèt e pafwa li te konn fè gadò; tout sa te fè l'vrèman optimistik andepi katyouboumbe vil la ak pataswèl kòlè ki souflete trankilite lavi, epi detanzantan rafal betiz ki deklannche tribò-babò. Anjelin te toujou rete kontan ak preyokipasyon l'kòm achiv òganik chanjman bridsoukou zòn lan te travèse pandan twaka syèk ki sot pase la yo.

Li te sot selebre 85èm anivèsè li le 12 Novanm, 2009. Anjelin pa te ka pi kontan jou sa a, avèk prezans tou lè kat pitit li yo, sèt gran-pitit ak senk gran-gran pitit; li te santi l'leje ak kontantman. Moman sa a se te youn ke li te toujou ap reve de li depi lè premye pitit gason li an, Richard, te fèt an 1946. Nan peryòd sa a, peyi a t'ap mache sou pinga l'akoz mouvman "rejete" a, anplis elèv inèvèsite yo te kòmanse vin pi radikal; avèk chak vire-tounen politik yo te pran pwoteste kont rejim militè a ki t'ap simayen chaplèt. Volatilite peyi a te bay Anjelin laperèz e sa te lakòz manmzèl te pati pou Lafrans avèk fanmi l'kote yo te rete jouk 1956. Pandan tan sa a, Teyodò te fè yon doktora nan

filozofi politik nan inivèsite Sorbonne (Sòbòn) epi Anjelin limenm te pran yon lisans nan Sosyoloji.

Debòde ak enèji e optimis, yo te retounen Pòtoprens avèk kèk adisyon nan fanmi a. Yo te rantre ak de lòt pitit, Jòj e Anjelina, plis Richa ki te gen onzan. Anplis, Anjelin te ansent avèk dènve pitit gason li an, Teyo. Te gen yon van chanjman radikal ki t'ap soufle nan Ewòp aprè fachis yo te fè bèk-atè, epi vivasite mouvman ekzistansyèl ak sireyalis yo ki t'ap vanse panse politik ak kiltirèl te satiyèt vizyon Teyodò ki te wè yon opòtinite pou li te ka pozitivman radikalize ideyoloji jèn entèlekyèl yo ki t'ap mande pou chanjman. Aprè dizan yo te fè an Frans, yo te wè nesosite pou yo te retounen lakay yo.

Lakay. Mo sa a te woulawoup nan yo. Men, 54 lane pita, Anjelin te santi l' dezyorante avèk mo lakay la. "Kisa yo t'ap panse?" Anjelin te mande tèt li pandan zye l' te fikse sou yon ti gason ak inifòm lekòl sou li epi ki t'ap pouryanisman simayen pise sou yon pye-zanmann. "Kisa ki rive pèp nou an?" Tout vye sèn, tout teyat malouk lari a te monte vin jwenn li atravè fenèt dezyèm etaj li a. Pafwa li konn mande tèt li si Ayiti te gen yon lame djanm e responsab èske vil la t'ap swente repiyans ak fandanman. Li te sonje bonjan pwomnad li te konn pran bò La Seine, epi dividal pyès teyat li te konn al wè nan Broadway avèk Teyodò. Epòk Teyodò te yon diplomat, yo te viv nan Montréal, New York, Madrid, kingston ak Sen-Domeng. Anjelin te eseye jwenn rezon ki fè yo te chofe pou yo te retounen ann Ayiti aprè yo te kite Lafrans, men li pa te ka sonke poukisa andeyò de lanmou pasyone yo genyen youn pou lòt ak pou Ayiti.

Anjelin te souri lè li te wè Teyodò nan mitan salon an epi malman abiye avèk yon ansyen inifòm Ameriken ki te fèt sou estil rad jenral McArthur. Djakèt vè-oliv la te lejèman blaze ak gwo bouton mawon yo ki te boutonnen miwo-miba, epitou pantalon an ki te konn byen chita sou misye te vin on ti jan twò gwo pou kò Teyodò ki flengen-nen. Anjelin sonje jan misye te anpenpan, kòman li t'ap chèlbè kòm yon ofisye si li te rantre nan militè. Pandan Anjelin te pèdi nan gade Teyodò, li vin sonje jan papa li te rayi militè e jan li t'ap vrèman es-tomake pou li ta wè bofis li ki enstale l' nan yon inifòm Ameriken.

Memwa Anjelin te al valtourinen jouk nan lane 1934, lè li te gen apeprè dizan. Li sonje kanpe sou balkon an avèk manman l', papa l' e de gran frè l' yo, Elliard ak Dimitri, ki te gen 12 e 14 zan. Yo te kanpe youn akote lòt pou yo te ka gade marin Ameriken yo ki t'ap anbake bati-man yo epi navige-kite bè Pòtoprens lan nan yon lafimen epè e grizat. Anjelin raple l' premye fwa li te wè sòlda Ameriken, kèk te kanpe-gad epi lòt t'ap parade ak bòt disèt-longè nan pye yo devan Palè Nasyonal la ki te fèk konstri e ki te deja tounen yon atraksyon piblik. Anjelin sonje tou foto l' ke enpe touris te pran pandan de frè l' yo pa t'ap gade, e yo te mande l' pou li te souri. Manmzèl te renmen ale sou Channmas. Li sonje tout kalite santiman ki te genyen lè marin yo te leve lank__jan papa l' ak enpe nan zanmi l' yo te kontan, alòske te gen lòt moun ki te benefisye de prezans okipan yo te parèt tris.

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Nan jou aprèmidi tribilasyon sa a, Anjelin te chita bò fenèt prefere l' la, li sonje fason li te wè yon grap zwazo ki t'ap vole-ale nan direksyon nò, epi syèl la te parèt vid. Nan mitan tout vakàm abityèl yo, te gen yon seri bri fò ki te vin ak revibrasyon ki te sòti anba lavil bò bòdmè, epi touf nwaj pousyè te jiponnen toupatou. Briskeman, li te wè yon machin k'ap boulinen epi al anfonse sou mi anfas la. Machann yo te panike, kouri-kite tout machandiz yo atè epi chape-poul yo. Imedyatman, li te santi ondilasyon an, glougoudoup la kòm si li t'ap pran sekous anwo yon gwo vag lanmè anndan yon ti kannòt. Pandan li te rapidman kwoke poto ki bò fenèt la, li te wè mari li ki enstale atè a k'ap rele pou defen manman l'. Konfizyon, pousyè ak vonvonman ranpli tèt li pandan li t'ap eseye fè sans ak tout sa ki te pase yo. Lè Anjelin te jèn, li te deja santi sekous tè a men jamè yon tranbleman kòryas konsa, yon douklaj zògòdò anba l' ak nan tout alantou l'. Après, yon silans simityè anvayi vil la kòm si milye reveman te anpare riyèl li a. Avni Kristòf te silans, Pòtoprens te pran dèy__yon silans gradoub ke Anjelin pa te eksperyanse depi sou Papa Dòk lè li te konn enpoze kouvrefe l' yo.

Anjelin te leve-kanpe byen dousman, re-balanse l' epi te vin vrèman rekonèt li nan doulèrere mari l' ki t'ap plenyen soufrans li sou planche a nan kwen goch pyès la. Li te konplètman imobil. Zenglen ansyen asyèt seramik, gode, vè ak soukoup te vòltije toupatou sou planche

depoli a. Lanmò te fè aparisyon devan zye l', kè li te palpitate epi pran bat byen rapidman pandan manmzèl t'ap revizyone boulvèsman ki te akapare vil la aprè Jean-Claude Duvalier te kite peyi a an'86. Kankannman kawotchou, mò tyake epi yon atmosfè laperèz t'ap trangle Pòtoprens. Li fèmen zye l' pou li te ka eseye reflechi sou yon bagay ki pi agreyab, men anmwesite pyeton yo te fòse l' tounen nan reyalite moribon l' lan.

Anjelin vire-tounen lari a ak zye l' jiskaske li reyalize ke kay vwazen l' yo te kraze. Manmzèl lage yon kout-rèl pandan li mete de men l' dèyè tèt li epi sou bouch li pou li te ka kontwole doulè sezisman l'. Enstentktivman li te bouje kò l' adwat kwen kay la bò ti chanm dèyè a kote yon ti pon menm gwsè ak yon kabann mono-plas te konekte de kay yo. Yon avalanch zegui te dingding vizyon l', aprèsa yon chalè kouri monte sòti anba ti vant li pou te al sakaje lestomak li. Manmzèl te esoufle, kilbite epi lage yon kri ekòchman ke li pa te janm panse ke li te kapab lage. Li te menm panse sa te enposib, petèt se te yon move rèv, yon alisinasyon nan mitan jounen an. Li pa te vle aksepte sa li t'ap konstate yo.

43

Pandanstan, nan yon doulè maskawon, Teyodò te goumen jan li te kapab pou li te ka sòti anba zenglen sa yo ki te epapiye atè a. Misye te finalman jwenn fòs pou l' te kenbe youn nan pye tab yo ki te al frape kont yon pantiyè antik. Lè li te finalman rive nan chanm dèyè a kote Anjelin te toujou ap agonize, misye te vin reyalize ke kay kote de gran-gran pitit li yo t'ap dòmi a te konplètman efondre. Pa te gen pyès siy manman yo, pyès siy bòn lan, pa te gen siy nonplis de dènye pitit-pitit gason yo. Pou Teyodò, se te yon bonb ki te lage. Gwo inifòm blaze ki te sou li a te fè l' sonje foto Hiroshima ki te sanble ak apokalips, imaj ki te toujou ret grave nan memwa l'.

Ekzistans malandouran Teyodò a te pran frennen douvan zye l', kò l' te tranble, li pa te ka depase dènye panno a, tèlman leprèz te enpoze l' desann macheskalye a, laperèz pa te pèmèt li gade Anjelin; fanm sa a ki te toujou rete byen kalm e ki konn pran swen l'. Teyodò te ret kanpe-kloure anba konfizyon ak bri vire-lòlòj ki te nan tout alantou l'. Tèt li te vin lejèman lou, vizyon li te kòmanse trouble pandan

gout kriye te kòmanse gonfle nan zye l' jiskaske yo ponpe sòti al glise desann tankou yon rigòl ki fòme sou figi l' ki bade ak pousyè e takte san. Soudènman, li mamòte kèk mo pawòl-trennen epi li plenn pandan li t'ap rekile kò l' pou t'al trimayen sou madan m' li. Anjelin te grape l' nan zepòl goch pou yo te ka doubout kò yo aprè premye replik la. Yo toulède te lage yon kout woyii manchlong epi Anjelin fè siy-de-lakwa pandan sekous la diminye. Pou sipriz li, Teyodò ki pa te di jebede pou apeprè yon mwa pran pale sou ka gran-gran pitit cheri li yo ki plati anba dal beton yo.

“Teyo, ki sa nou pral fè?” Anjelin te mande ak dlo nan je l' pandan li te kontinye kenbe mari l' byen di ki te pote an bèso koud-bra dwat kase l' la. Anjelin te vin sonje jan li te konplètman bliye kòman Teyodò se yon nèg ki te dyanm pandan misye te vin apiye kò l' sou li aprè dezyèm replik la te sekwe kay la.

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Macheskalye dèyè a te faya epi prèske kontounen tankou yon akòdeyon. Ti pa Anjelin yo te renka e yo te vanse l' tankou yon banben k'ap tatònen, epitou chak fwa planch yo te grense, yon kòd la-perèz te rebondi nan fon kè l'. Fòk li te travèse-ale nan kay kraze ki te joukste avèk pa yo a, esperan, sèlman esperan ke tout moun te ka an sekirite, e petèt yo te deja kanpe deyò a. Petèt li t'ap jwenn yo on ti jan poudre ak pousyè, oubyen zòkòse, men kanmenm anfòm; Anjelin te vle pou yo tout te kòdyòm. Pandan li te sòti nan pòt dèyè a, li te voye yon koudèy deyò a pou l' te ka ankese kondisyon tout kay kraze yo, li te imedyatman panse a apokalyps. Tout kay an beton yo ke Anjelin te wè konstriksyon yo te batba, enkli kay de nan gran-pitit li yo ki te abite nan premye ak dezyèm etaj avèk fanmi yo. Li te kriye pandan li t'ap chimi kò l' tankou yon jibye ki pral labatwa. Anjelin jigote kò l', pandan jiwèt figi l' te pèdi kontwòl tèlman move imaj t'ap kannale nan sèvo l' epi klake epin kòtèks li. Toudenkou, avèk bri ekrazman pati tèt kay goch la, manmzèl te met de men l' nan tèt li pou li te ka sispann yon doulè tankou filangèt zegui ki t'ap pike anndan zo-bwa tèt li.

Anjelin te vin an dezawa, li pa te menm konsène sou fason li te abiye ak wòb-de-chanm epi pantouf. Li te konplètman dezoryante menm

sou Teyodò ki te ret nan kay la lè li te pran kouri ale nan lari a, kote ki te gen yon dividal moun ki t'ap monte-desann tankou founi fou nan chèche choupitay yo. Vwa Anjelin t'al rankontre latriye lòt yo ki t'ap mande an dezolasyon: “èske ou te wè gran-pitit gason m' lan Edwa?” Yon anfourayman vwa te kalfourade youn lòt se sèlman bout son tankou “ou pa wè...?” “Ou pa wè?” ki te kontinye ap woulawoup epi fè eko nan tout lari ki te badijonnen ak pousyè.

LYONEL TROUILLOT

BILLET À CELLE QUI HABITE MA RUE

I

46

Par le plus banal des hasards, tu habites dans une autre ville la rue où je suis né, au même numéro. La maison de mon enfance n'était plus qu'un tas de ruines sous lesquelles vivait seul un vieux chien exilé. C'est dangereux pour un chien de faire peur à ses maîtres. Si les choses avaient suivi leur cours normal, le chien devait mourir de solitude, les ruines du poids de leur vieillesse. Mais, comme tu le sais, le tremblement de terre a précipité beaucoup de choses dans la mort. Le chien, les ruines, et des milliers de gens. Au hasard, parmi les choses qui sont tombées ou se sont mises à voler: toute la vaisselle des vieilles dames, les vestiges des amours d'antan, dentelles et bijoux, photographies de vieux amants; les livres, les bibelots, la pacotille et les romans de gare; les toiles, niaiseries et chefs d'œuvre appartenant à ce courant de l'époque jean-claudiste qui s'appelait avec arrogance "l'école de la beauté," ou à la tradition réaliste, ou encore à ces peintres dis "naïfs" dont le savoir serait venu la nuit, on ne sait d'où, à l'heure du rêve; les guitares, les derniers pianos mal accordés par manque de spécialistes et parce que les pianos faisaient depuis longtemps partie du décor intérieur de bourgeois parvenus et d'aristocrates déchus sans donner de musique; les flûtes à bec et les cahiers de dessin que les instituteurs utilisent malgré eux dans les écoles élémentaires depuis l'introduction d'un cours d'éveil à l'art et à la culture; les registres où sont consignés les titres de propriété, les déclarations définitives d'impôt; les lustres; les balcons; le toit blanc du Palais national avec l'honneur du président; les châteaux d'eau suspendus au-dessus des villas (ceux qui ont droit à l'eau la conservaient dans des châteaux, les autres la cherchaient en voyageant des kilomètres); les hôtels de luxe et les hôtels de passe; les commerces officiels du centre-ville dont les propriétaires ne payent pas toujours leurs impôts, et les dépôts contenant les marchandises importées du Panama et de la République dominicaine par les "madan sara" qui constituent le secteur

commercial que l'on dit "informel"; les bancs sur lesquels des écoliers avaient gravé au compas le nom de leur premier amour ou dessiné la caricature d'un vieux maître... On ne fera jamais le compte des objets qui ne font plus partie de nos paysages intérieurs. Comme il sera difficile de se faire aux nouvelles maisons qui viendront remplacer celles qui ne sont plus. Les maisons aussi ont de drôles de façons de mourir. Il en est qui se sont contentées de glisser dans la rue. On les croirait intactes, juste déplacées. Mais en regardant bien on aperçoit dans leur intérieur démoli des restes de salle à manger et de chambres à coucher, ou des débris de jouets d'enfants. Il en est aussi que l'on voit penchées, branlantes mais coquettes, refusant encore de s'étaler, comme une jeune fille qui, se sentant glisser dans la salle de bal et craignant le ridicule de la chute, se met les mains sur ses côtés pour garder un semblant de dignité, et cherche un dernier appui avant de s'effondrer. D'autres, robustes mais rompues, ayant vainement livré combat, s'étant accrochées à leur base avec l'énergie du désespoir jusqu'à ce que force plus grande que la leur les eut forcé à se coucher, leur ventre éclaté, leurs poteaux cassés en deux comme des jambes de pantin qu'un enfant méchant s'amuserait à disloquer. D'autres encore, prises par surprise, n'ayant ni le sens de l'esthétique des jolies filles, ni l'énergie des combattants, tombées sans savoir ni comment ni pourquoi, assourdies elles-mêmes par le bruit de leur chute. Et les cris. Ce fut d'abord le bruit d'une ville qui tombe, puis l'immense cri de ceux sur qui la ville était tombée. Je ne saurais te dire combien se sont relevés. Nous entendrons longtemps les cris. Même au cœur du silence.

II

Je pense à toi qui habites ma rue dans une autre ville. Je pense aux vivants. D'ordinaire, quand meurt un proche, une part de nous meurt avec lui. Nous recollons nos morceaux, et avec cette somme restante, meurtrie mais compacte, nous apprenons à survivre à la part manquante. Quand tant de gens meurent en même temps, collègues et amis, amantes et voisins, parents et descendants, la part manquante devient plus grande que celle qui reste. Aucune personne n'a en elle assez de vie pour pleurer tant de morts. Alors, l'on choisit de penser aux vivants. Je pense aux vivants, aux corps mutilés. Si le corps hu-

main est la plus belle des preuves concrètes de la beauté du monde, sa mutilation tient du sacrilège. Il y a dans mon quartier une petite fille dont le visage compte désormais une moitié morte et une moitié en vie. Pourra-t-elle sourire d'une seule moitié de son visage? Je pense aux corps qui sont sortis indemnes de la chute de la ville. Je regarde les vivants qui déambulent dans les rues. Et les vivants, en général, me paraissent plus sympathiques qu'hier. Non pas qu'ils aient plus de mérite. Il y a ceux, avec leurs mains d'ouvriers et de simples citoyens, qui ont affronté la pierre et le ciment pour sauver des vies. Il y a ceux qui, brandissant un passeport étranger ou se faufilant dans le sac à main d'une amie ou le portefeuille d'un protecteur, se sont empressés d'aller ailleurs refaire leur vie. Il y a ces deux jeunes femmes, médecins, que je croyais connaître, qui n'ont soigné personne et s'installaient ailleurs le lendemain. Il y a la lâcheté en blouse blanche et le courage des anonymes. Il y a cet homme qui, aidant une voisine qu'il connaissait à peine à sortir un parent du rez-de-chaussée d'une maison encore branlante et sur le point de s'effondrer, a dit: soit nous la sauverons, soit nous mourrons ensemble. Il y a cette revendeuse de mon quartier qui a voulu revendre à ses voisins le pain gratuitement offert par le boulanger du coin. Héros et ordures. L'humanité a toujours été chaque chose et son contraire. Les vivants ne sont ni pires ni meilleurs qu'avant. Ils me sont devenus sympathiques simplement parce que je partage avec eux un préfixe: drôle de statut communautaire, nous voilà tous des survivants. Je dois désormais me surveiller pour ne pas transformer le simple fait d'être vivant en vertu ou mérite. Pour les victimes du tremblement de terre, il n'y a pas eu de façon honteuse de mourir. Mais il y a des façons plus humaines que d'autres de survivre, ou de vivre tout simplement.

III

La consigne étant de ne pas dépasser dix mille signes, je compte les mots. Je ne sais pas quelle sera la chute. Je ne sais même pas quelle était mon intention de départ. Je te parle parce que tu es loin. Avec les gens que j'aime qui ont comme moi assisté à l'horreur, nous préférons parler d'autre chose. Au fond, dès que l'on se mêle d'écrire, avant comme après la catastrophe, c'est toujours d'autre chose que

l'on parle. Je n'arrive simplement pas à nommer cet autre chose qui voudrait ici prendre sens. Je sais que j'ai gardé les mêmes idées sur l'urgence d'un bonheur sans contrainte et d'un partage plus juste des richesses du monde. Il y a des gens ici qui possédaient trois maisons, sept voitures, des banques et des comptes dans d'autres banques. Laquelle de leur maison a tué leur premier enfant ou leur vieille mère impotente? Il y a des femmes dont le corps n'a jamais connu la jouissance qui sont mortes dans la réticence et la soumission à un homme et à des coutumes qui leur survivront et piégeront demain d'autres femmes. Il y a la mort qui est venue interrompre des vies mal vécues qui n'auront jamais la chance de s'améliorer. Peut-être voudrais-je te parler de l'humilité et de l'urgence de produire du bonheur pour soi et les autres. Et aussi de l'inchangé. Dans les jours qui suivirent le tremblement de terre, la ville entière couchait dans les rues, les cours et les terrains vagues. Aujourd'hui, je vois des gens qui s'empressent de retourner dans leurs maisons, celles qui sont encore debout, pour se barricader comme autrefois et reconstituer leur petit monde. Je vois aussi ceux qui attendront longtemps avant d'avoir un toit. Moi, je rêve encore de maisons aux portes ouvertes. C'était mon rêve d'avant, et il reste inchangé. Oui, de ville en ville, de mon quatre vingt neuf, rue Saint-Antoine, effondré sur un chien exilé, à ton appartement, même rue, même numéro, mais dans une autre ville, je rêve de portes ouvertes. C'est peut-être de cela que je voulais te parler. Au nom des morts. Et des vivants. Peut-être aussi voulais-je te parler des chiens. Port-au-Prince, le soir, était leur territoire. Je ne vois plus les chiens. Leur absence n'est pas une fuite. Ils sont descendus sous la terre. C'est une preuve de leur fidélité à la ville. Je voulais te parler des chiens qui agiteront longtemps leur queue de fantôme, cachés sous les décombres, arpenteurs souterrains de la ville qu'ils aimaient, Port-au-Prince morte et vivante.

JOUJOU TURENNE

NAUSÉES ENTREMÊLÉES, DOULEURS ENTRECROISÉES

Il y a Haïti, ses morts, ses survivants;
il y a mon cœur brisé, des rêves envolés;
il y a le chaos dans ma tête;
il y a aussi et surtout le quotidien.

Il y a la solidarité...qui donne force, courage et espoir.
Il a l'espoir...l'espoir...l'espoir
Il y a le besoin de m'impliquer dans cette mouvance de reconstruction,
mais il y a aussi le star-sytem qui va trop loin, parfois je trouve...ça prend des allures de concours de gloire...
Je me demande où iront tous ces intéressés dans 1 mois, 2 mois, 1 an, 5 ans...20 ans...

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Il y a tous les parents adoptants qui ne comprennent pas pourquoi ils doivent encore attendre...
Mais il y a aussi, sous le nez de tous, des vols d'enfants à Port-Au-Prince au moment où j'écris ces lignes.

Il y a la télé...
puis il y a le silence.

Quand je conduis la voiture, je ne comprends pas pourquoi les immeubles sont debout...
La seconde qui suit, je me rappelle que je suis à Montréal, même si ma douleur se rend à Kiskeya.
Kiskeya...où chacun a perdu des êtres chers.

Il y a des pleurs...clairsemés de sourires...parfois de rires...
Oui, je pleure.
Je souris encore...
Je ris parfois...

C'est mon quotidien.

Il y a une douleur plurielle logée dans des poupées russes.
Une de ces poupées a le ventre vide,
Affamé de dignité pour mon peuple dont on montre des images
d'horreur sensationnelles...inutiles pour comprendre l'essentiel.
L'essentiel d'une douleur teintée de combativité, de courage, de
témérité.

Il y a les Américains qui font de la médecine de guerre et amputent
à ciel ouvert.

Il y a les chiens qui dépriment parce qu'ils sentent trop la mort.

Il y a la nuit, des femmes, des filles, violées, violentées.

Il y a que ce n'est pas le moment pour une peine d'amour.

C'est pas le moment pour une peine d'amour.

Il y a mon peuple, my people, blood of my blood,
sans Requiem, en ce moment, qui enterre ses morts.

Il y a parmi eux des coopérants, des humanistes étrangers
qui ont cru à une meilleure Haïti.

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Il y a...qu'il n'y a plus de palais national haïtien.
Et s'écroule en même temps une partie de mon enfance
D'où j'entends retentir au loin qu'il est huit heures sur toute
l'étendue du territoire national.

Il y a des résilients qui font le ménage à 5 dollars par jour.
Il y a un restaurateur qui donne à manger gratuitement jusqu'à
épuisement de ses stocks.

Men anpil chay pa lou
Une douleur collective est plus légère à porter
Tout de même...
Si j'étais alcoolique, je me paierais une brosse!
Toxicomane, je me gèlerais le cerveau!
Il me reste des pleurs en guise de Requiem pour des cadavres em-

pilés dans des fausses communes.

Mes chers soldates, soldats inconnus, je vous pleure, je vous chante, je vous danse...

Je vous pleure, je vous chante...

Je préfère pleurer, rire, chanter, écrire, danser et espérer...

Car il y a au loin des enfants au cœur battant attendant une chance de vivre autrement qu'en mode de survivance.

Voilà une porte que je ne ferme pas...juste le temps de me refaire.

Je dois reconquérir la femme que je suis devenue...son corps, son cœur, son âme, ses espoirs, ses rêves, ses regrets.

Je dois consoler la fille d'Haïti qui a perdu des êtres chers.

Il y a l'agenda, les échéanciers...

Je dois travailler...

Heureusement que pour l'instant, ce sont des enfants qui me remplissent de tendresse.

J'essaie de leur rappeler que chacun est unique, spécial avec un petit diamant dans le cœur...

Je leur dis qu'ensemble ils forment un bouquet de fleurs...

Ma tête est donc fleurie aujourd'hui.

Il y a l'espoir...la tendresse.

Il y a l'espoir...la tendresse.

Il y a l'espérance.

Il y a mes tisanes pour arrêter le temps.

Il y a ma famille que j'aime et qui m'aime singulièrement.

Ma mère qui fait la soupe,
mon père présent dans son silence,

Il y a...

Il y a mon frère qui se prépare à partir à Kiskeya. Kiskeya dont il reste, à travers les ruines, l'espoir de sauver une vie, un bras, une jambe; mon frère qui vole du temps au temps pour qu'on s'apporte de la tendresse...

Ma sœur qui vient de perdre sa meilleure amie sous des décombres et tient le coup et nous nous assurons que nous ne nous effondrons pas de douleur, car moi aussi j'y ai perdu...

Il y a ma presque tante qui m'appelle de Miami dans la nuit pour me dire qu'elle est en vie...

elle a pu s'échapper de cet hécatombe!

Joie intense.

Sanglots.

Joie profonde.

Il y a l'humain...

Il y a la grande chaîne de l'humanité dans sa vibrance, qui me fait sentir humaine...

Il y a mes amis d'ici également éprouvés, et nous partageons le quotidien autour d'un repas express, d'une conversation, d'un câlin, d'un sanglot...puis d'une blague 3 X...Oui! C'est encore ça la vie au quotidien!

Il y a mes amis autour du globe qui m'envoient des courriels, qui veulent tous faire quelque chose. Et il y a tant à faire...à re-faire...

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Il y a rage de vivre autour de moi.

Je m'en imprègne.

Il y a ma rage de vivre!

Il y a ma rage de vivre!

Il y a toute la fraternité et la sororité du conte qui est avec Haïti, qui est avec nous, qui est avec moi.

Il y a les Madelinots, la Guyane, la Guadeloupe, la France, l'île Maurice...

Il y a Janou, il y a Sylvain, il y a France Lyse, il y a Dominique, il y a Lyse, il y a Tiny, il y a Jude...

Il y a Jocelyn qui m'envoie une carte par la poste avec un vrai timbre...

Il ne fait rien comme tout le monde ce cher Jocelyn...Il est resté

enfant...Il est spécial...avec un diamant dans le cœur...
Il y a une fillette de 12 ans sortie des décombres au bout de huit
jours les bras en V comme Victoire.
Il y a vous avec qui j'ai envie de partager ce texte.
Il y a encore la vie...
Il y a que je craque...que je craque de tendresse...
Il y a l'amitié...
Il y a l'espoir...l'espérance.
Il y a un million d'orphelins.
Il y a les survivants.
Il y a la culture...la littérature.
Il y a les arts vivants...vibrants.
Il y a la volonté d'un meilleur lendemain.
 Il y a encore et encore rage de vivre!
 Il y a rage de vivre!
 Il y a rage de vivre!

Merci d'être là.
Joujou, Amie du Vent
31 janvier 2010

BEAUDELAINÉ PIERRE

PORT-AU-PRINCE SE LÈVERA

J'apprenais que les vagues, tôt ou tard, se déchaineraient. Qu'elles se déchainent souvent. Je refoulais secrètement au-dedans de moi l'excitation néfaste de voir venir le malheur. De vouloir l'affronter. Et, comme Télumée, avoir jusqu'au bout le courage de tenir la bride du cheval. J'ai lu Simone Schwarz-Bart tout juste avant. Je hachais le livre page après page. Le livre aussi me faisait subir sa torture. On se déchirait l'un l'autre. Avec hargne. Ça me prenait par la tête et j'avais mal partout. Mon cœur se tordait de douleur. Ma gorge se nouait. Des tripes? J'en avais plus. Ah Télumée, tu me vidais toujours de mon moi. Tu me charriais, m'emportais; et je devenais comme vagues sur l'océan. Dans ma gorge, mes larmes ne tarissaient pas. Mes dents se serraient. Ma salive devenait sang. Mes muscles étaient de glace. Je ne respirais plus. J'allais de champ de bataille en champ de bataille. Je pleurais avec toi tes morts. Mon cœur se déchira lors de l'incendie. Et quand l'amour s'en alla loin de toi, je hurlai moi aussi. De douleurs. De dépit. J'avais mal partout. Mais, tonnerre! J'aimais ce plaisir-là. Car toujours tu tenais la bride du cheval.

55

Je te relisais quand c'est arrivé. Mon amie Pat me l'a annoncé. Au téléphone. On revenait d'un parc d'attraction. Avec mes deux enfants Ann-Lyse et Max. Ma fille aimait bien cette journée-là; l'une des plus belles depuis son arrivée à Minnesota, fin décembre 2009. Je la regardais traverser allégrement les engins. Et mon cœur ne pouvait se contenir. Je disais alors à Pat, quand Annie sera en Haïti, elle demandera à son père de l'y emmener régulièrement. Comme si c'était la porte à coté. Le seul point sombre jusque-là a été d'apprendre qu'un ancien compagnon de lutte a été assassiné. Mais je venais tout juste de comprendre avec toi, Télumée, que les fleuves et les rivières se perdent tous un jour dans l'océan. J'apprenais donc à vivre de mes joies et de mes douleurs. Je me suis entièrement donnée à cette excursion.

Au téléphone, j'ai entendu «earthquake». Je n'y ai rien vu. L'anglais n'est pas ma langue. C'est une bonne excuse, n'est-ce pas. Je fais donc passer le temps. Le temps de comprendre qu'on parlait de la même chose, Pat et moi. Ou de découvrir miraculeusement que les mots pouvaient changer subitement de sens. Mais tu m'as appris, Télumée, que même si parfois les mots sont plus forts que nous, notre guerre, ce ne doit pas être contre les mots. Je compris, bien plus tard, que mon ami Anil avait trainé dans la tombe des milliers d'autres avec lui. Toujours Télumée, tu m'apprenais à tenir la bride du cheval.

Mais ce fut alors le bombardement.

56 Earthquake par-ci. Earthquake par-là. Port-au-Prince s'écroule. Le pèp vanyan est debout. Le Palais national succombe. Le drapeau tient encore. Le gouvernement est sous les décombres. Préval est sinistré. Pétion Ville ne résiste pas. Où es-tu Mr. le Premier Ministre? 20,000 morts. Qui dit mieux? 100.000. 200.000. Mr. le premier ministre a parlé. Au secours! L'appel est déchirant. Les Pays Amis s'affirment. L'aide s'organise. C'est la fête de l'humanitaire. Tout est là. Sacs à dos. Bateaux. Drapeaux. Hôpitaux de campagne. Il faut assurer sa présence à la fête de l'urgence. Et surtout arriver le premier. C'est politiquement correct. Vive les jeux olympiques! Non à l'occupation. Non à l'esclavage. Tutorat? Joli mot. Mais j'en veux pas! CNN. Fox News. Internet. Twitter. Face Book. Red Cross. Convoi. Packing food. Packing clothes. Sinistrés. Au secours! Volunteer. Diaspora. Transfert. Transfert d'argent. Transferts d'enfants. Trafic d'enfants. Assistance humanitaire. Fund raising. Que le diable se venge! Lètenèl pifò. C'est aussi la voix de mon peuple. Ingouvernabilité. Pays pauvre. Pays sinistré. Anmwe!! Jacmel. Petit Goâve. Tout s'écroule. Obama est debout. Bush-Clinton aussi. Préval se relève. Responsabiliser l'irresponsable? Gouverner l'ingouvernable? Peut-être oui. Peut-être non. Le monde entier se lève. Tonton Sam comme chef. Il faut sauver la première République Noire du monde.

Et le cheval chevauchait ça et là. Les rênes me glissant peu à peu de mains. Je me laissais aller. L'année dernière encore, je disais à ma mère, sujette au diabète et qui n'aimait guère se tenir à son régime, «si

tu ne te conformes pas, tu ne verras pas grandir ta petite fille». Trois mois plutôt, j'invitais mon père à venir me voir à Minnesota. Opportunité rare de décrocher le visa de touriste. Je l'entends encore qui me disait au téléphone, «Mwen pa ko ap mouri, m ap gen tan vwayaje». Pour me dire qu'il vivrait longtemps encore et qu'il aurait le temps de voir le pays de Tonton Sam. La dernière fois que j'entendis la voix de mon frère au téléphone, il s'apprêtait à se rendre en France. Un «Allo» seulement. La communication s'était interrompue. Des rêves? J'en avais. Pour mes enfants. Pour moi-même. Mais je n'en avais pas de plus grands que de remettre à mes parents un peu de ce qu'ils m'ont donné. La nature m'avait-elle volé mes rêves? M'avait-elle pris mes amis?

Ah Télumée, on aura beau tenu les rênes du cheval, la nature ne nous rendra jamais ce qu'elle nous prend. On aura beau être fort devant l'adversité, mais les souvenirs sont là pour nous guetter et nous rap-peler de ne pas trop nous réjouir de nos petits bonheurs. L'attente était interminable. Pas de nouvelles. Silence complet. Silence fatal. Que sont-ils donc devenus? Aurais-je de la chance? De quoi mon Dieu m'avait-il donc épargné? Avais-je été donc épargnée? Et je revenais vers toi Télumée. Je revenais toujours vers toi. Je t'emportais dans mon sac à provisions et nous prenions ensemble le bus. Au retour comme à l'allée. À peine je grimpais l'autobus que tu m'emportais déjà; j'avais constamment les yeux baissés vers toi. Et mes voisins passagers ne devineront jamais les chemins par lesquels nous chevau-chions, tandis que le chauffeur cheminait le University Avenue.

Et de l'appartement, montait l'odeur âcre et pure des épices. Je la montais, la marmite. Je la montais plus souvent encore. Les épices précédaient toujours le jerk. Mon soupir s'y ajoutait aussi. Je remuais. Je brassais à n'en plus finir. Je me sentais alors proche du foyer à trois pieds et du réchaud à charbon. Et mon mal se perdait dans la senteur aigre de mon mayi kole à venir. Alors, Télumée, je te voyais avancer allégrement. Faisant fièrement face au vent et à la pluie. Libre de tes deux seins. Je compris, à ce moment-là que des ténèbres les plus sombres peuvent jaillir la lumière. Même si ma lumière tardait encore à venir.

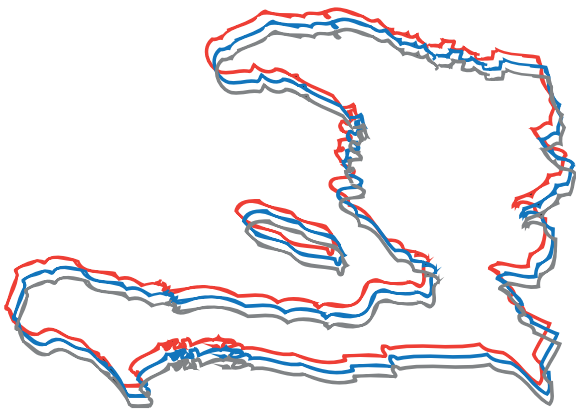
«Annie...». L'information ne sortait pas encore. Peur et culpabilité m'envahirent tour à tour. Je la regardais. Bientôt 4 ans, ma fille. Et non un an comme son frère Max qui se contente seulement de nourriture et de câlins. Je lui devais au moins cela. Une explication. Qu'elle comprenne enfin le silence soudain sur les préparatifs de retour en Haïti. Qu'elle n'ait plus à me demander constamment, «tu dois m'acheter dentifrice Dora pour apporter en Haïti». «Tu vas rester un petit peu plus avec manmie ici, dans le pays d'Obama». Et voilà! C'était dit avec beaucoup de remord et un sourire recherché, comme pour lui signifier que c'était la plus normale des choses. Je lui ai parlé du pays d'Obama. Elle aimait désigner ainsi ce pays-là où elle était en visite. Je la regardais et je guettais désespérément une excitation qui ferait tomber même ses souvenirs. Je ne pouvais pas lui dire que la ville où elle était née s'était écroulée. Ni que grand-père et grand'mère dormaient à la belle étoile. Je souffrais cruellement de la détacher si brusquement de granny et de Titit, de granpa et de Tatie Lily. J'aime à penser Télumée, que je m'inquiétais exagérément de l'état psychologique de ma fille et que ses amis de cœur ne lui auront pas beaucoup manqué. Elle me demanda tout de même à l'annonce de son séjour plus long «et Tatie Lily, et Tatie Titit?». La séparation ne se ferait pas sans heurts. Mais depuis lors, Télumée, je l'appelai, fanm vanyan, femme forte.

Je te relisais encore tandis que l'odeur du pois grillé montait de la marmite. Les petits pois crépitaient, sautaient, changeaient de ton à la seconde. Je sentais alors mon esprit se détacher de mon corps et prendre des ailes. L'eau de la marmite, dansait, s'agitait, remuait mon âme à l'intérieur de moi. Tu te renversais dans un fou rire; je me disais alors, voilà ce que c'est que d'être libre! Le vent lui-même et la pluie ne se tiendraient pas devant l'éclat puissant de ce rire invincible. Nous chevauchions ensemble comme le maïs danse au pas des petits pois et fait bouger la marmite. Et sous ton jupon de femme, je voyais Fon Zombi renaître de ses douleurs et de ses calamités. J'entends ma fille me demander «C'est quoi fanm vanyan?» Le ciel s'ouvrit et sur mon cheval, tout Port-au-Prince se faufila devant mes yeux. Tandis que je maintenais les rênes, son palais et ses lumières, ses fanm vanyan, ses garçons tout de bon marchaient tout droit devant le soleil.

Comme pour dire, la vie aura beau déverser sur eux ses tonnerres, ses coups de vents et ses orages, elle aura beau secouer sur eux la poussière de ses sabots, ils ne lâcheront jamais.

Ainsi va la vie, chère Télumée. Ainsi va la vie sous le soleil. Un jour, elle nous arrache les boyaux; et c'est le néant. Un autre jour, elle nous offre le bonheur du ciel; et plus heureux que nous, il n'y en a pas. Mais au bout du compte, on se regarde et on se dit, quoiqu'il puisse arriver, tout finit toujours par s'arranger. Les gens vont et viennent. Ils naissent et ils meurent. Tout se construit et se déconstruit. Il faut que Port-au-Prince se renouvelle.

Elle a sa place parmi les étoiles.



ENGLISH
ORIGINALS & TRANSLATIONS

BEAUDELAINÉ PIERRE

PREFACE

Comment écrire et quoi écrire: how to write, and what to write. In front of you is a collection of texts from Haitian poets and writers describing the earthquake of January 12th, 2010 the way they lived it. The volume takes its French title from the piece by novelist Yannick Lahens, in which she reflects on the role of the writer as a builder of history.

The project took off in the immediate wake of the earthquake. On the initiative of the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa, a dozen writers and poets answered the call and took up the challenge. In spite of everything, with deliberation and care, they made the effort to put into words that which was overwhelming, that which could barely be grasped. For how can the day of January 12th be written? How, and why, should one attempt the painful task of pulling out from the debris materials for a collective identity?

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In this volume we have gathered some words. Nothing but words. With the hope that in bringing them together we will give ourselves and those who come after us a sense of who we are and of what will unite us from now on. For how not to write? Shouldn't the writer, too, have her place in the rebuilding?

In adding to the now coined 'literature of 1/12/2010,' the contributors to this collection assert and reestablish once again the sacred role of literature in the construction of memory, out of which identity is born. Because for all the pain that turns sobs into bleeding wounds and for all the memories tearing up our guts, the pen will not rest, nor will the words remain silent. The authors of this volume understand that no matter what, it is essential that it should be we, the daughters and sons of Haiti and the generations coming after us, who must build ourselves up to rebuild our world, drawing on the sense we make of our memories and of our past.

Haiti's literature has, after all, long been fed by our misfortunes and our challenges. For a long time it has carried our hopes, conjuring up between the covers of a book or on the boards of a stage, the country for which its sons and daughters sighed and yearned.

It is thus the hope for another, a reconstructed Haiti that appears between the lines of this volume. The 1/12/2010 earthquake is re-told through a number of themes as profound as they are varied—from that of personal despair to that of international solidarity coming to the fore in the crux of the tragedy. Put together, these words offer the reader one vision of a future community.

Most of our contributors live in Haiti; some are part of the Haitian diaspora in the United States and in Canada. Some of the pieces were originally written in Creole, others in French, and some in English. Yet the authors of the volume are united by the fact of having been devastated, partially or altogether, by the earthquake, and by their wrenching effort to give meaning to its memory. We thank them warmly for their contribution.

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A special thanks to the translators who worked hard to make available the texts to the English-speaking readers. And a profound thank you to Joëlle Vitiello, for introducing the volume and helping the reader to get a better sense of the post-1/12 era through the pen of our writers.

Comment écrire et quoi écrire simply means that words and a pen are still much needed to speak, feed, build the hope that Haiti will stand again.

JOËLLE VITIELLO

INTRODUCTION

How to Write an Earthquake /Comment écrire/Mou pou 12 Janvye is a literary response to the January 12 earthquake that took so many lives in Port-au-Prince and the southern coastal towns of Haiti. For several weeks after the quake, Haiti was at the center of the world, a world that expressed great solidarity with the survivors and heard, perhaps for the first time, the dignified heartbeat of the island, with its history, its challenges and convulsions, and its amazing culture. Over a year later, as the world has turned its voyeuristic attention to new tragedies and hopeful revolutions, this anthology brings back to our consciousness the freshness of the pain, the fears, the losses, the shocks and the aftershocks of the earth. The sounds of the roofs collapsing, the agonies of the departed, the hopes and anguishes of the survivors, the unrecognizable landscape with its fissures, its intimate smells, the novelty of the tent camps, and the calls to the gods are all evoked in the anthology, a poetical memorial to the dead (one role played by the arts, as Edwidge Danticat suggests in “Haiti: Bloodied, Shaken—and Beloved”) and a site of remembrance for the survivors.

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The title of the anthology reflects the ethical question that each writer, each poet, each artist has confronted in the face of overwhelming catastrophes: what can I say? Of what use is writing? And as Yanick Lahens writes in her most recent book, *Faults*, “How to measure up to that tragedy” through writing? The thirty-five seconds the earth took to violently shake the land in its first spasm on 01/12/10 created a time border between a “before” and an “after” that defines all stories. Writing bridges the two times and provides a shelter for memory, individual and collective. Through poetry, fiction, and non-fiction, it traces the ethos of pain and care that affected everyone on the threshold of the fault line.

How to Write an Earthquake /Comment écrire/Mou pou 12 Janvye anthologizes texts written for the most part shortly after 01/12/10

by writers and poets who live in Haiti or its diaspora. It brings together different genres, generations, and languages (Creole, English, French). Some of the writers included are well known, but this anthology also introduces a new generation of Haitian writers whose remarkable talent gives an idea of the richness of contemporary Haitian culture and literature.

Haitian literature is indeed a very well-kept secret. Since its independence in 1804, Haiti has produced a vibrant, world-class literature that deserves to be recognized globally. The better known contemporary writers in the collection include Edwidge Danticat, who has shared her love for Haiti and its people with great discernment since the earthquake. “Haiti: Bloodied, Shaken—and Beloved” appeared immediately after the *terre tremblé* in *The Miami Herald*, and evokes the period of uncertainty, with its hopes and anguish. She has since written movingly in her most recent book of essays, *Create Dangerously*, about her losses, and more recently, in *The New Yorker*, about the mourning of the dead and the release of their souls, a year and a day after the earthquake. Others are known in translation, for instance Lyonel Trouillot, novelist and poet (*Street of Lost Footsteps* and *Children of Heroes*). Three books of short stories by Yanick Lahens have been recently collected and translated by Betty Wilson as *Aunt Résia and the Spirits and Other Stories*.

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Authors such as Trouillot and Lahens may be more familiar to francophone readers, as they were among those Haitian writers whose voices were heard in the days after the earthquake in French dailies, weekly magazines, and on French literary and humanitarian TV shows. But the majority of writers who wrote the moving poems and short prose in this anthology represent voices that are not well known in the West, even though each of them has already published novels, short stories and poetry in French or in Creole and is well known among Haitians. They have received prizes and awards for their work, and writing is their daily labor of love. It is a privilege to introduce their writing to a wider audience concerned with Haiti and Haitian culture, as each poet and writer shares with the readers a profound and intimate connection to Haiti.

Beudelaine Pierre is the author of two novels (one of them written in Creole), and a book of short stories. Dominique Batrville has published five volumes of poetry in French and Creole, a novel, five plays; he has written dozens of articles for the newspaper *Le Nouvelliste* and has acted in about ten films, including *Royal Bonbon*. Patrick Sylvain, Chenal Augustin, Valerie Deus, Gaspard Dorélien, and Fortetson Fénelon, are all published poets in Creole, French, and English (published in Montréal, Paris, and Boston in the case of Patrick Sylvain). Joël Lorquet is a famous singer, whose song “Pity for Haïti, Father,” was written just after the earthquake. The original, sung in creole, is a moving cry chronicling the misfortunes of Ayiti. Raoul Altidor has published short stories with *Mémoire d’encrier*, a small publishing house in Montreal run by the Haitian poet Rodney Saint-Eloi, who works relentlessly to bring Haitian literature to the world. Among the authors published, Lucie Carmel Paul-Austin, beyond being a poet, has also been a Minister for Women’s Affairs and at a later date a Minister of Education. Claude Bernard Sérrant writes for a young public and Joujou Turenne is a story-teller and performer. Many among the authors live in Haiti and are journalists there; some of them reported on the most painful aspects of the earthquake in its immediate aftermath.

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While many books have appeared on Haiti and about the earthquake, from a variety of perspectives, and while several anthologies of writers, from Haiti and elsewhere, have been published in France and Montreal, this is the first anthology about the earthquake entirely by Haitian poets and novelists published in English. I happened to be in Port-au-Prince on January 12, 2010 and had landed just a few hours before the earthquake to participate in a TV literary show about Haitian literature, linked to a literary festival. During the first nights afterward, it was the poetry, the stories, the prayers, the songs of the *rara* bands and the drumming convoking the gods that sustained me spiritually, and allowed me, as a humble guest, to keep hearing Haiti’s heartbeat. I have read each text of this anthology in its original language and in English, and been moved by each.

The authors of *How to Write an Earthquake* keep the memory of Haiti alive, and beyond their individual differences, beyond all political affiliations, they have come together, as in the spirit of a poem I heard Jacques Roch read many years ago at my first visit to the Literary Fridays organized at the University Caraïbes by Lyonel Trouillot: “All together we will rebuild Haïti.” The poem, accompanied by a gentle acoustic guitar, was then one of reconciliation and unity. Today, after the earthquake, the ongoing cholera epidemic, the indefinite duration of life in tent camps, the disappointments of the international community in spite of genuine global solidarity, and the general uncertainty about a democratically elected government, the narratives and the songs that tell the stories of the departed and the survivors are still very poignant and central, and remind us of the need for unity and forging forward together. Nou la! Nou ansanm!

RAOUL ALTIDOR

translated from the Creole by Patrick Sylvain

AMAYIDE

Cold air came from underneath the slabs, and one-legged Amayide hurriedly hoped to see if it was true: her daughter had died. It was so sudden, just yesterday she was among us. The spirits had climbed on trees. The sky was drunk. Saltpeter earth. Splintered earth. Churned earth. Not enough nerves to restrain pain. Sounds of breath hushing in the news, shaking all corners heralding what had happened. Cement roofs collapsed. Amayide's neighborhood turned into an abandoned cemetery. The capital city pissed blood and dirtied its underwear with a sudden diarrhea. Even its eyelids were matted with excrement.

It was time for digging earth and dumping bodies. The smell of corpses oozed all the way to the moon and the sun. The air was thicker than bags of salt from the Lakaye seacoast. Amayide sifted dust and dredged all corners of earth with her bare arms. Thousands of screams went on without any response. Help was absent in the trenches. Amayide became an invalid underneath a straw hut at Saint Peter's Common. "Abandon the city! Put up barricades!" The cries pierced the eardrums.

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Evasive lenses framed the town's nakedness: agonies for free. Severed legs. Chomp down on bits, and tighten belts. Morose images. The living dead are on wheelbarrows. Broken bleachers, destroyed stadiums. The authorities wore sorrow-face masks. They are begging in English. Blood is money, same color as the Red Cross. The game is on. Oh! Oh! NGOs and the State are the same aces. During the day, they sound as lifeless as roaming zombies. At the start of twilight, they measure their loot inside their inner sanctuaries. They know how to wave their magical wands to reroute the divine food before it lands. They smeared quicklime on the people's faces. The same

monkey business is repeated in front of an inaugurated feeble house. Ya, ya, ya, ya...For how long? When is the payback? That's what Amayide wants to know.

The fire is red-hot underneath the three majestic pillars. The bottom rung cannot simmer down. The top is almost overcooked. The reality remains off-kilter. Each time the country moved forward, roads ahead were barricaded, a detour was ordered. Everyone picked up their faded pillowcases and snored away. Every morning, without fail, they found themselves further back in the line. Time to start over?

Amayide neither cried for food nor fought for a gallon of water. She stirred around the tents, bursting with forbidden words until the international forces arrested her. Amayide died suffocated, naked, under the weight of a soldier raping her. It was at a camp near the airport. That's the end.

BONEL AUGUSTE

Translated from the French by Nataša Đurovičová

SPACE DESTROYED

I have always been suspended
among the furtive gods
calling, in a vision
of mined earth,
on the closed gates of the destroyed space
that still demands the incandescence
of cabbalistic signs
on the threshold of the four paths
to the final journey

Insolent thirst,
in quenching it the water leaves
a long trail
of venomous spiders
a movement of metals
squealing

In the chalky rise of the yeast
the bread is a bite of dismemberment

My gland is the only eye through which I
observe
my piece of the world
my parity with men

CHENALD AUGUSTIN

translated from the French by Nataša Đurovičová

THE EARTH SUSPENDS ITS BUTTERFLY CYCLE

The earth is gripped by fury
Hundreds of thousands of flowers
Barely budded
Are crushed
Among earth's voracious larvae

The earth screamed until the stars
Became ash
Flowing on a river red with blood

The sun has lain down
With ruins and clots of blood in its throat

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Port-au-Prince, Jacmel, Léogâne, Petit-Goâve
Open sky cemeteries
Bloodied silences

Deserted streets
Closed houses
Children playing with their starved shadows
A bird crucifies the stench of dead cities to the horizon

Port-au-Prince, Jacmel, Léogâne, Petit-Goâve
Open sky cemeteries
Bloodied silences

DOMINIQUE BATRAVILLE

translated from the French by Beudelaine Pierre

THE 35 SECONDS BETWEEN FEARS AND TREMBLINGS

That Tuesday, uncommon and somewhat apocalyptic
Comes back to me like the vision of moons without circumcision
A Tuesday evening so grievous it may belong to the Mayan calendar

Fears and tremblings!

I still hear the gallop of the horses of death
I see again the hard face of Baron-Lacroix
I catch the shouts of the dying
And I cross the gaze of the Gorgons.

The four horsemen of Saint John
Would they still need the seeds of dawn
Of a country with blue angel mornings?
Will they still contemplate our stained glass
And our christic murals?

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Fears
And then, the tremblings
Fears, fears, caused by the aftershocks
Thank you Dear Lord
Thank you to the Invisibles.
One more shot of Barbancourt rum
To guard the land.

Lazarus did not die.
Lazarus has just appeared from the entrails of the earth.
To die a prisoner of the masthodonts
Is as violent as the wreck of the Titanic.

To see again the dawn
On a Wednesday the 13th
Has the feel of a Palm Sunday
Without yesterday's fears
And the 7.03 crash, made in Richter!

Will we have to hold hostage
Saint-Jacques Majeur's marvelous horse?
Whose fault is this?
That of the centaur of Dessalines?
Or that of the arrogant gaze
Of the unrepentant Maroon slave?

Like any blue angel
I dive back into those two 35 second dreams
Two alerts of the earthquake
In my Balthazar-of-the-Tropics bed
Two dreams to bring fears to some
and to cause trembling in others.

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Fears about the fall of a Palace
Built for puppets.
Trembling and lamentations
At the passing of trucks filled with corpses.
The trembling of children without bread.
The trembling of widows for a cup of water.
The trembling of carnival hats
The trembling of the temples of GoodLord!

The carnival will be held during the week of four Thursdays
Trembling and grunts of joy
For those pretty tents...

A fucking storm
A stormy fuck
In this damned time of natural disasters!

Fears and tremblings!

My nights will be made of pure water
And of unleavened bread
I shall have the knowledge of old-time bakers
To feed those whom I shall look straight in the eyes,
With some rather personal constraints remaining:
Fears and tremblings.

EDWIDGE DANTICAT

HAITI: BLOODIED, SHAKEN—AND BELOVED

(*Miami Herald*, January 17, 2010)

Haitians like to say that Haiti is *tè grave, glise*, slippery ground. Even under the best of circumstances, the country can be stable one moment, then crumbling the next. Haiti has never been more slippery ground than it is right now. Bodies littering the streets. Entire communities buried in rubble. Homes pancaked to dust.

For those of us who know and love Haiti, now our hearts are also slippery ground. We are hopeful one moment then filled with despair the next. Has 200 years of existence finally reached its abyss, we wonder? But now even the ground is no more.

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Our love has not changed. In fact it is even deeper. But Haiti, or what is left of it, has changed. It has changed physically, earthquake fault lines catastrophically rearranging its landscape. The mountains that have been stripped of their trees and mined for construction materials then crowded with unsteady homes have crumbled, leaving both the poor and the rich homeless.

This is a natural disaster, but one that has been in the making for a long time. In part due to neglectful and even vicious import-favoring agricultural policies that have driven Haitians off their land into a city built for 200,000 that was forced to house nearly three million. If a tropical storm can bury an entire city under water as tropical storm Jeanne did to Gonaïves five years ago, if a mudslide can bring down entire neighborhoods as many have on a regular basis, then what chance did Port-au-Prince have with a 7.0 earthquake? Not to mention the aftershocks that may continue for months. “The ground keeps shaking,” one, thankfully fine, friend told us from Carrefour, the epicenter. “The ground keeps shaking.”

AN UNFAIR SHARE

Haiti has gotten more than its share of attention since the earthquake this past week. We who know and love Haiti have long been pained, and sometimes frustrated, that it's a place that can only be noticed when it is on its knees. Still no one is more grateful than I for all this attention as I await news from loved ones.

From my cousin Maxo, who had recently returned to Haiti to continue the work of his father, my uncle Joseph, a minister who had died here in Miami in the custody of the Department of Homeland Security five years ago.

From my aunt Rezia, who, when I was diagnosed with tuberculosis as a young girl, was the only person who kissed me on my face anyway.

From my cousin Fritzner, who ran for mayor in Delmas.

From my artist friend Jhon Charles, whom my husband and I hosted in our home during Art Basel and who at the time told the *Miami Herald's* Lydia Martin, in Haitian art, we use whatever materials we can find. But walking around the fairs, I was amazed at how many materials artists from other parts of the world have. I see all endless possibilities now.

I live and breathe every moment hoping to hear from them and literally hundreds of other people whom I cannot imagine my life without.

LOOKING LISTENING

Watching the news and seeing the desperate, hungry crowds, I look for their faces. In those assembled outside to sleep, I look for their shapes. Over the sound bites on Haitian radio stations, I listen for their voices. Seeing wounded children wandering the streets alone, I see my daughters. I see myself.

Still I am grateful. I am grateful, even if prematurely and perhaps wrongly, at the possibility of their survival. I am grateful for every country in the world that has offered the help that might make it possible. I am grateful for every dollar that's been donated. But even as I am grateful I am also fearful. With so many people sleeping outside, I am fearful of the first rain. I am fearful for the looming specter of food shortages and contaminated soil and airborne diseases from disintegrating bodies. I am fearful that this won't make for dramatic television anymore and all the care and attention that is being given to Haiti now will go away.

Haiti needs, and will continue to need, the kind of love and commitment that is not slippery. It needs our attention and care now, but it will also need it months, years, and perhaps decades from now. Haitians are resilient.

We will do our part. However, Haiti's friends and neighbors must remain as attentive and committed to it in the long run as they are now. Only then can Haiti not only rise, but remain out of the abyss. And above what is now, with corpses in every corner of every street, not just slippery ground, but sacred ground.

VALERIE DEUS

HAITI UNFINISHED

It's 4:30am and I can't write this poem
it's supposed to be about you buying carrots
but I wanna make popcorn and it's raining this morning

I want to write you another note about
feeling like a jack-o'-lantern hollow with
the seeds and threads missing
with the soup and the guts gone
there's no independence day long enough
or revolution deep enough to save me
from writing a poem about watching novellas with your mother
while drinking tea
or picking hazelnuts in her backyard

that would be our weird shadow poem
hiding behind
wanting to write about you going to church
and how little girls' patent leather shoes
those black shiny shells
those little girl church shoes
look like those big black beetles that make awful noises in the summer
Toussaint—do you hear them up there?
crunching like conch shell suppers

they seem spacious almost
the shoes round and hollow-mouthed
with all the mamas and the buzzing
and the praying built in
except for the catholic stuff
all the kneeling and confession
you can almost see the guilt
that doesn't seem as spacious or barely a sunflower

but once it was—a sunflower
or was it an island
of bright lights
of syrup smells
fried banana yellow sunshine
heavy and heavy
with wild flowers which grew upon its breast
the beautiful nude with white cassava sands
is now brown shoe worn and forgotten
smiles with teeth put away
like breath put away
and saved for less brutal times
less careless times

Why have you forgotten you?
the you of brown feet and spine sweat

Toussaint why eat dinner alone?
you crowd the plate and grumble in corduroy pants
about ungrateful beans
and too many grains of rice spoiling the plate
the world awaits your arrival
you'll face them alone wearing your hair and dancing
will you dance with me, sir golden slave?
will you shimmy into the night?
will you give me too much to drink?
will you touch me inappropriately and take advantage?

I sing you a song
and give you the skinny on the strange fruit
that grows on spacious southern trees
about waiting hours for the next erect minute
up north I become your island bride via Kings County
I sing you
you my immigrant song
my rebel tongue swoons your ear with borrowed eloquence
saddened you wonder where hope went with her promises

you peek around the corner with hunger

I read our love letters scribed by a misunderstood appetite
I question the caffeine in your words
your battled brown feet
and how they must ache today more than ever
they burn with village flood water

Are we going to ride all night?
In car 9B52
sway forth and back again
low swing of light
your cup trembles with each turn
we haven't seen bread in days and cook up bones
smile a wood smile for coins

Toussaint where are you?
the sink is leaking and the babies haven't been fed
and like me they wait and wait
They weep rivers run out of time
of pumpkin soup seeds and string that get caught mid throat
they dream of pulling the ocean at both ends
to end it all
all the looking over your shoulder and stealing your words

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GASPARD DORELIEN

translated from the French by Nataša Đurovičová

IT DIDN'T COME DOWN FROM ABOVE

It didn't come down from above
The wind is cold
The hail didn't come down from above
Our hundred-year death
Our daily
Survival count
The heart mustn't be allowed to tremble
The earth
A reckless monkey
Has misplaced its own heart
The wind is icy
The sleet didn't fall from the sky
Reason enough
To count the dead
There aren't enough fingers
Over there
In Haiti
The hearts echoed the tam-tam
Percussion of the first negroes
Terror of the earth
The heart mustn't be allowed to tremble
The earth
A hellion leech
Devoured our houses
Our loves
Our false hopes
Death did not come with rain
To count the disappeared
Not enough room in the memory
A frozen windowpane

The tornado comes not from the firmament
From now on
Here
In Haiti
Death is an even number
12
The heart mustn't be allowed to tremble any longer
The earth dreads a snare drummer
Death is the enemy of all resounding tam-tams.

FORTESTSON 'LOKANDYA' FENELON

translated from the Creole by Valerie Deus

UNDER THE THRESHOLD

Under the threshold of the door
all the roads take rendezvous
In the entrance of the room
The news gave no warning
Only the earth knew
No one invited him

it happened like a thief
It broke, it bruised
It carried away all the buildings
In broad daylight
It took mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers
Cousins and even friends
Tear stained eyes didn't invite him

Our mouths filled with bitterness
It's the day of misfortune
It's the day we craved blood
Even the ancestors were not saved
No one invited him in bad days
in anger he took control of us

Seconds later
it went off
left us naked
Without panties
Our intimacy, our dignity, lost under its shadow
everyone looked alike
Every beast looked alike
Day and Night look alike

We are babies just growing our teeth
every day we change diapers
tonight I will be the thief
so when the earth shakes it will be for its mother and father
I won't give it an invite
Under the threshold of the door
The breath of the ground is under my feet.

YANICK LAHENS

translated from the French by Nataša Đurovičová

HOW TO WRITE AND WHAT TO WRITE?

Starting on the Wednesday of January 13th, 2010, I have begun a daily log with a simple accounting of the facts and descriptions of the damage, which I wanted to be as precise as possible. And of course, the distress. The distant kind, suffered by the unknowns whom one passes in the streets, the shelters and the health centers, as well as the distress suffered by those closer—a neighbor whom we have watched unable to help, the slow agony under the rubble of the Ministry of Justice, the distress of the young woman to whom we gave a roof over her head and who walked every day over to the collapsed building to finally retrieve from under the debris, and right next to his hand, her husband's cell phone—then, five days later, his body.

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I began doing it, and it had to be done. A certain kind of memory work must unavoidably pass through this unflinching look at the event itself, the only guarantee that one day the inevitable onset of forgetting will have set in. A matter of standing up for humaneness on this precarious crest, the point at which a character in Marguerite Duras' novel *Hiroshima mon amour* says 'I am gifted with memory, I know forgetting.' Then two images appeared to confirm this to me, and to remind me—as if I needed to be reminded—that my role as a writer could not limit itself to some macabre accounting or to a simple mechanical transcribing of facts, but rather consisted of inventing a world which amplifies, resonates off of, or extends the one we're in.

The first image is that of a child emerging from under the debris, his smile like a sweet fruit, and saying to his mother, 'I'm hungry and thirsty.' The second is of a girl sitting next to the marketplace who, three days after the earthquake, is getting her hair braided, looking into a mirror. I loved the little boy who was saying yes to life, who, as it were, thumbed his nose at the misery and who was looking into the

future with sunny eyes. And as for the second image, I said to myself that if girls still want to be pretty so that desire and sweet talk can run after them, all hope has not been lost. And both reminded me of an essential truth: if we do not celebrate life despite everything, if we do not transform it by art or literature, then the catastrophe has crushed us a second time.

So, as trying as this event has been, it has not succeeded in extinguishing the writer in me, a writer who more than ever before asks herself: what to write about, and how to write after such a catastrophe? I was thus eager to get back to the feelings I know only too well in front of a blank page and the keyboard. First off, the sense of being, inevitably, always, a step behind life itself. Then that of wanting to circle round and round the same questions, as if in a stubborn sarabande. Hoping to come up with answers, some having to do with form and others bearing on fundamentals, even while knowing that I would only be offering answers to these questions that are provisional, in need of revisions, time and time again. I like the strength this act demands. For, writing is not simply the tracing out of words: 'one must be stronger than one's own self to face writing, one must be stronger than what one writes about.' In these difficult days I try to gather some of this strength so as to transcend the event, and to move again toward my readers with words capable of touching them as if they were hands.

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Haiti, 28th January 2010

JOËL LORQUET

translated from the Creole by Valerie Deus

PITY FOR HAITI, FATHER!

January twelve year 2010
Is a day we will never forget.
A couple of seconds and the earth shakes
Afterward it's devastation

Many homes were entombed
This day two million people died
Those who were rich are now poor
They all now sleep outside

Pity for Haiti, Father
Pity for our country
So we can stop counting bodies
So Haitians can stop crying
So Haiti can progress
Like other countries

Our country has had coup d'états
We have gone through civil wars
We have had hurricanes, floods
Now it's an earthquake

God why is it always us
We know we haven't been good
Is it that we're cursed?
This is why we ask for forgiveness

Haiti is sorry, Father!

LUCIE CARMEL PAUL-AUSTIN

translated from the French by Beaudelaine Pierre

TORPOR (NY, JANUARY 14)

Immovable, brought down,
Inert, floored
I breathe with pain, the breath is slow.
I measure the space I have crossed.
The past, where nothing resists ...
The day hasn't begun
And already, with a tired and misted gaze,
I efface. I erase. I forget.

Inert, nailed to my land,
I do not know where to go, run, hide.
Stunned, mute, my soul expands in front of me,
I see it sliding, as if a leaf on water,
I remain immobile.
Inert, aware of the fear that takes hold of me possesses me
I hope again for redemption.

Inert, fixed, weighed down,
I welcome the rising day,
Renewing my bitterness, my agony, my fear
My resentment and my torpor ...
Our children, our daughters especially
Scour, graze, and devour
However they want

Inert, stiff, I wait for my time to come
The time of abandon, of estimate
The hour is set, present, inert, tenacious

LUCIE CARMEL PAUL-AUSTIN

translated from the French by Beaudelaine Pierre

TRANCE (NY, JANUARY 14)

Nothing left to do than to put away my books,
And my notes
My pen has stopped working,
As dry as the tears in my eyes.
Seen, heard, granted!
I laugh now, with a hoarse throat
I no longer suffer to sleep
Or to remain awake.
O watchtower, do you still keep an eye out? For what?
Do not blame me, nor the gods either!
May he croak! Can't be helped...
That's the way it goes, The Right to exist.
At long last I found the saving flaw
To shelter me
Safely. That is where I live.
My eyelids are free.

LUCIE CARMEL PAUL-AUSTIN

translated from the French by Beaudelaine Pierre

I DARED (PAP, MARCH 29: FIRST DAY)

I dared...I bit into the dust, eyes reddened by shame, bitterness and fear all at once. I lied down. I do not wish to dream this night, for it will be too dark. Too heavy, as well. Begin anew and above all do not challenge the mood of the hour...

I am what I am. I want nothing else than to erase this terrible pain, which splits my chest and heart. I wish for nothing but to erase from my memory this feeling of emptiness and inconstancy. I want to get there. I shall make it tomorrow, I am certain, but for now, I am all suffering, all pain, all confusion and, above all, hurting.

LUCIE CARMEL PAUL-AUSTIN

translated from the French by Beaudelaine Pierre

REFUGE/SHELTER (PAP, APRIL 2)

I possess this place
Of rest, of inner peace,
Inside me and inside my home.
In one place I dwell,
In this inconspicuous sanctuary ...
Where I came to abandon
Without regret or bitterness
Those whose face becomes more and more
Imprinted in my memory,
My senses, in my head.

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I saw again, without expectations, the streets,
The hallways and avenues, the hills,
While sheltered, without thrust nor fear
In this bubble of air, warm, dark and dusty.
Without comfort or protest,
This place lives inside me.
In spite of me,
In spite of time.

BEAUDELAINÉ PIERRE

translated from the French by the Nataša Đurovičová

WHEN MY SUN WILL RISE

I spread my legs, and at my feet the gods, the spirits, and the loas mixed in a hallelujah of a believer with a thousand faces. I bent under the weight of pain, mute and indifferent. I waltzed under the wings of the bewitching breeze and offered my breasts to the taunts of the wind. I hiccupped. I sweated. I barked. I pushed, groaned, and whimpered. Bent but not broken; weakened but still standing. A violent and painful spasm, like a hard stool, rebellious and fickle, that eventually empties the bowels. So, you came and declared war on the sun. Like many others, you too let out that cry celebrating victory over life. How could we not believe all the promises, and hope against all hope? Deep down in my heart, deeper than a knife plunging into a squash, sprouted the thought that a son would bring glory to his mother. I loved like never before.

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Among those of our race, my son, you were the fiercest. I see you taking your first steps under the sun, in the midst of your cousins, so different from you, but so similar too. What I love about you is the color by which everyone knows that you are your mother's son. A color that makes your cousins say how much we look alike, you and me, and how different we are from them. The color in the name of which our brothers have long kept us subjugated, your father and me. The pain and hope of it make us both laugh now. You came, our chains were broken, and we began to speak. The boiling cane syrup they poured on your feet could not slow you down. The mad ants that ate your ankles and ears in the evening and crawled under your loincloth, inside of you, did not get the better of you. They cut off an arm. They maimed you. You came to know death herself. But you were always reborn, ever more yourself, ever more determined to find your place under the sky. So we all asked ourselves questions, astonished, about the one who dared to challenge the sun on its journey. As for me, I constantly brooded over you in my heart. You lived within

me the way water finds its way into the dry earth. I just knew, watching you, my son, that the moment had come for us.

Do you remember our walk at dawn on the day after your terrible fight with your cousins? We silently walked the road that led to the great plantations of the north coast. The air smelt burnt and the flying debris of charred leaves and trees found refuge on your negro wrap. I watched this son as he went about his territory head high, shoulders always straight. I saw myself puff up with pride. Yesterday you again scattered your most powerful cousins. You never stopped telling them that you were a horse that could never be tamed, a gust of wind that couldn't be stopped. They knew that the inevitable would eventually happen. You proved them right. For the first time I, Ayiti, Bohio Quisqueya, felt that I was myself. I was reborn through my own innards. My spirit went far, far, away. I saw myself as Queen Anacaona. I rediscovered Africa and its evening tales; I greedily swallowed the delicious Saka-Saka that used to satisfy our palates in earlier times. Every step brought us closer to our roots and in my heart I repeated endlessly, may our gods be blessed.

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Need I tell you that I know of no one who was happier than I was at that time? Coffee and cocoa came forth in abundance from my innards. I was endlessly fertile. I was the arid and desiccated earth taking its revenge for having been kept sterile too long. I finally rediscovered my own fertility. So I gave. I gave without respite. It was my only purpose. Do you remember? I came into my own in my greenery. And the wind, the sun, the rain, thunderstorms and hail, all found refuge in the shadow of my wings one day. The sound of my wealth spread to the countries in which our cousins live. You, my son, went to some of them and shared with them the fruit of freedom wrested away in violence and blood. They said you were shameless; they said you were getting too big for your britches. Some of your cousins deliberately followed in your footsteps. Others swore to make you pay and pay dearly for your insolence. That's when my ordeal began and my guts were slowly torn out of me. There is no one more wretched than me.

You didn't see the tragedy coming. You were too busy showing of the pride of being a free negro. You were so proud to have carried the seeds of freedom within you that you forgot that sunshine follows rain and rain follows sunshine. You even forgot your roots. You cursed and rejected your own flesh, the very ones that fought with you to free your race. You went to your cousins and called them "brother." You called your own brothers "stranger"! You gloried when you sat with the other and were proud to resemble him, in being more like him than he was himself. This happened over time. You and I went from failure to failure. Then came the winds of division. You went far away from me and I knew that I couldn't survive. I called on your spirit. You didn't understand me. You no longer spoke your mother's tongue. I begged you like never before to come back to me. But you were far away, busy feeding at others' breasts. You glowed brightly by the heat of other teats, better able to open the doors of the world than I could. Despite it all, my heart was even fuller of love and pride seeing you make others happy. I never stopped singing your praises. I never stopped saying how deep your roots were within me. That was my only consolation. But I knew then that I was lost, fated to nothingness.

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We are all one day reduced to nothingness. We find ourselves suddenly wrapped in the folds of its skirt. That may be what happened to me. It must be my fate, not to see my innards rising under the bowl of the sun. It may be that I am a cursed land, fated to watch my bones dry out one by one. Evil walks ahead of some people. Maybe I'm one of them. In my mother's womb already I was no doubt fated to see the fruit of my breasts reject the belly that brought it into the world. Could it be that this outer shell, which I had believed was my strength, smells of death? They called me beast of burden, wood of ebony. They said I was the shame of humanity. What was my crime? Do you know, my son? What would I be sentenced for? Have the gods, too, turned their backs on me? Nature herself raises the whip that lashes me from head to toe. I suffered knife stab after knife stab. Yet I always got back on my feet. The evening downpour often caught me by surprise. The next morning I was up on my feet, at dawn, lighting my pipe and roasting my coffee.

For despite everything, nature gave me weapons of my own. How many times were they sure they had defeated me? Disgusted, they called me *potomitan*; my strength and my fortitude earned me the nickname *fanm vanyan*. The year 1804 ended; 1915 did too. But 2010 was a blow. For seconds that seemed endless, I was taken into the depths of death to atone for who knows what sin. My eyes looked on nothingness. I told it that the time hadn't yet come. I groaned, I screamed like never before. Death would not get the better of me. This would be the last battle.

I lost in it over half of your brothers and sisters. My innards fell by the thousands. I was left with one arm, maimed. Your sisters and brothers whom I had carried and fed at my breast died, helpless in the powerful tempests and winds. Water and fire hit me from left and right as if I were a *san manman*. I bent. Like a reed. But my back was not broken. Although my belly shook and many of my sons and daughters were departed, my eyes again turn toward nothingness. The time hasn't yet come.

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It was from that moment on that they truly saw me as a *fanm vanyan*. How is it possible to understand such heroism in the face of death? Then I saw your cousins come to my rescue from the four corners of the planet. I again became the center of the earth. I understood then the power of love. Yet I couldn't help but see them competing in a contest in which the most powerful set themselves up as tutors. There is a right to interference rather than to indifference. The relief effort? A fleet. But you see, my son, I watch what is happening to me and take great pleasure in it. Don't they always say that it is in tragedy that you know your true friends?

Take Dominique, my neighbor. When the gusts of wind pushed me to the very bottom of the abyss, she was the first to hold out her hand to me. Although she and I have had a long history of quarrels and reciprocal hatred, I look at us and know that my relationship with her will never again be what it was in the past. Consider also the generosity of cousin Ucba. To ease the pain in my belly, she allowed cousin Amerinda, her staunchest enemy, to pass through her land, so that

she might fly quickly to my rescue. I must say, however, that most astonishing of all was the attitude of cousin Francesse toward me. Of all of your cousins, male or female, she had been the most murderous in the past. The most distant, too. In this time of mourning, she dressed in her most beautiful finery and came for a visit I won't soon forget. Surprising, isn't it? We all celebrated life in the face of death and forgot the quarrels we had devised in such detail.

You see, my son, ideas come to me this way. I hear that voice rising from the deepest part of my being, the echo of my roots rising up against nothingness. Don't flowers wither in the evening only to open again, more beautiful, to face the sun in the morning? Who doesn't die to be reborn? I am still hopeful that tomorrow will be a better day. But, please, come back to your mother. Never have I needed you so much. And despite all of my desire for life, I know that I won't survive if you abandon me. Whose mother would I be? Aren't you everything to me? I've tightened my belt around my belly and put my three-cornered kerchief on my head. I have been boiling my coffee since dawn and my bread is filled with *mamba*. I'm standing under the lintel of the door. I'm waiting for my sun to rise.

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CLAUDE BERNARD SÉRANT

translated from the French by Ian Stewart

A MISMANAGED AMPUTATION

Moïse, age 4. This little bright-eyed boy was unlucky enough to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, January 12, the day the earthquake ravaged Port-au-Prince, his place of birth. Bad luck: Moïse's left leg was amputated by the American doctors he was hurried to at the Center for Integrated Treatment in Turgeau, after two weeks of dragging his injury from one hospital to another.

Sitting between his parents, on a bench set up at the end of the street, Moïse is playing with an old cell phone. I barely approach him when he presses himself against his mother. It was the first time I had noticed these new faces among the others who had made their homes in the street where I live, in the Bourdon neighborhood.

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“You see what has happened to my son. He lost his leg for nothing,” Mrs. Métellus, the boy's mother, tells me, her voice sad, her face dead. Hearing those biting words, Métellus squeezes his head between his two hands.

Madame Métellus had become a mouth in need of an ear in which to pour her words. “When the earth started to shake, I was in the street. My two children, Moïse, age 4, and 17 month-old Sonel, were being watched by a young girl, an 11 year-old babysitter. The house collapsed. Sonel remained under the rubble. We pulled him out, unharmed, from his crib at 5 the next morning.”

Moïse was able to escape the catastrophe, as was the Métellus's little servant girl. But a piece of stone fell from the house and cut open the top of Moïse's left foot. The same evening, as voices of the crowd were proclaiming the end of the world, we took him down the street to the Canapé Vert hospital. “At that private hospital, the nurse hurriedly

stitched the skin on my child's foot with all the dirt still in it," she says, distraught.

The days passed, the corpses piled along the streets. It was in the midst of this that the battered family spread its pots, pans and sheets, to mark out their haven. Even as they were catching their breath in the hellish smell that Port-au-Prince had become, the kid's wound became infected. A neighborhood nurse, friend-of-a-friend, advised to find gauze pads to dress their son's wound.

Driving his taxi on the Downtown and Canapé Vert routes, Métellus admits having combed Port-au-Prince to find those invaluable scraps of material. Eyes brimming with tears, he says: "When I found the overpriced little strip of fabric, it was too late and it was too small anyway."

The week passed. The couple brought their child to La Paix hospital in Delmas. In this healthcare establishment, doctors and nurses were overwhelmed by the wounded, the dying, and the dead. Moïse was briskly given some basic care. Next!

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INTOLERABLE SUFFERING

The inattentive care for the child combined with his parents' slowness (slowness: a word that keeps coming back to the lips of their companions in misfortune, as a reproach) only made things worse for this martyr. That night, Moïse's screams of pain blended with those of other stricken, mourning their dead and crying out for divine mercy with each aftershock.

As the days went by, the child's suffering became unbearable. He was brought to a makeshift health center set up in a courtyard near the ruins of the Saint Louis Roi de France church (ravaged by the violent earthquake, 7.3 on the Richter scale). The nurse assigned to Moïse told the couple that his big toe was completely infected. Madame Métellus recalls with regret, "she took care of the wound and suggested that we go to the CDTI for treatment."

That same day, the die was cast. “My husband took Moïse and agreed to have my son’s foot amputated. Look what he did!” She says, motioning desperately at the done deed.

“Woman! Tell it like it really happened. Isn’t Moïse my child, too?” Métellus intervenes.

“Look at what you’ve done to my child! Good God, I can’t stand to see my boy this crippled,” Madame Métellus confesses. “Mama, mama,” pleads little Moïse. “You’ll make me sad. I don’t want to talk about it anymore,” grieves the man, his arms crossed, his whole trunk swaying back and forth like a pendulum.

“The doctors at Saint Louis Roi de France were upset to hear this news. They didn’t understand why anyone would do this to my child. Why?” she cries out in desperation.

Moïse keeps playing with his toy. Lost in his world, he seems to be paying no attention to the adults’ conversation. Occasionally, he moves his good foot.

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After his wife’s interrogation, Métellus, holding back tears, speaks: “You know, my son talked to me. I don’t know why. He told me, a few days before we amputated, papa, you need to make another Moïse. This one’s foot is no good. I told him, son, this is the Moïse I want to keep.” After a long silence, he added, “When the American doctors told me they were going to cut off the foot of my child, I screamed. I lost it.” His back against the wall, he accepted the doctors’ proposition. “They convinced me that Moïse would die if I didn’t agree right away. Did I not tell you this? Madame, did you not agree to this?”

At the end of January, Handicap International, a humanitarian organization working in the field, announced that there had been more than 2000 amputations after the deadly earthquake that ravaged Port-au-Prince and several other west Haitian towns. I saw Moïse again in mid-February, at the end of the same sunlit street, on the same bench, with his mother and younger brother. He was playing

with the same old cell phone he'd had in his hands the first time I saw him.

“Moïse, your friend came to see you,” his mother said. The little cutie didn’t respond and sank into the silence that always overtook him when spoken to by a stranger. But just as I turned around I heard “Mama, where is the new foot you promised me so I could play soccer?”

PATRICK SYLVAIN

translated from the Creole by the author

ANGELINE'S FRAGMENTS

Angeline remembered how Avenue Christophe used to look in the 1930s. Used American Fords would meander through the hills and squawk their horns as people stepped onto their verandas to peek at them, inching up the narrow streets lined with bougainvilleas, hibiscus and jasmine. She remembered how she and her girlfriends from school used to dress up in long cream-colored cotton dresses with their French straw hats askew. They would gingerly walk toward Champ-de-Mars where one went to see or be seen by the “better people” of Port-au-Prince. Angeline chuckled at the sight of the street vendors squatting across the street where the Lefebvres used to live, and where she had had her first cup of early Sunday coffee when she was thirteen.

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At 85, Angeline felt lucky and blessed to be alive, despite the fact that her husband Theodore was now slightly senile, and restless like a puppy. With two newborn great-grandchildren to sometimes look after, she felt optimistic in spite of the crowdedness of the city and the volleys of tempers that flared every now and then. She remained happy to be preoccupied with her life as a chronicler of the rapid changes that her neighborhood had gone through in three quarters of a century.

She celebrated her 85th birthday on November 12, 2009. Angeline could not have been happier that day, with all four of her children, seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren present; she felt light with exhilaration. This moment was one that she had long dreamt of, ever since her first son Richard was born in 1946. Then, the country was on edge due to an “anti-superstition” campaign, as the university students were becoming radicalized and rebelling left and right against the unmerciful military that was crushing their

movement with full force. The volatility of the country had caused Angeline to feel unsafe; she left for France with her family and remained until 1956. By then, her husband had earned his doctorate in political philosophy at the Sorbonne and Angeline earned a B.A. in sociology.

Filled with energy and optimism, they returned to Port-au-Prince with a bigger family. In tow were two additional children, Georges and Angelina, plus Richard who was eleven. Angeline also was pregnant with her last boy, Théo. With the radical fervor that swept Europe after the fall of fascism, and the buoyancy of the existentialist and surrealist movements that were pushing both political and cultural thought, Theodore saw in Haiti a perfect opportunity to constructively radicalize the young intellectuals who were clamoring for change. After living in France for ten years, both he and Angeline knew that they had to return home.

Home. The word reverberated in them. But 54 years later, Angeline felt dismayed by the word home. “What is he thinking?” she thought as she stared at a young man in school uniform who absent-mindedly urinated on an almond tree. “What has happened to our people?” She keenly took in scenes from her second floor window. She wondered if Haiti had a strong and responsible military, given how muddled, how unpleasant her town was. She remembered her long walks by the Seine and the many shows she had seen on Broadway with Théodore. While Théodore was a diplomat, they had lived in Montréal, New York, Madrid, Kingston, and Santo-Domingo. She tried to remember why they had been so eager to come back to Haiti after leaving France, but she couldn’t remember any reasons other than that they passionately loved each other and they loved Haiti.

Angeline smiled when she saw Theodore in the middle of the living room, badly dressed in an old American uniform fashioned after General McArthur’s. The slightly faded olive green jacket was unevenly buttoned and the once well-fitting pants had become too big for Theodore’s thin body. She remembered how radiant he looked, how dashing he would have been as an officer had he entered the

military. As Angeline gazed upon her husband, she remembered how her father despised the military and would have been appalled by a son-in-law wearing an American uniform.

Angeline's memories drifted back to 1934, when she was about ten. She remembered standing at her parents' balcony with her mom, dad, and her two older brothers, Elliard and Dimitri, who were 12 and 14. They stood side by side on the wooden balcony watching the Marines loading their boats and leaving the bay of Port-au-Prince in thick grayish smoke. Angeline recalled the first time she had seen the American soldiers, some standing guard and others parading with their big boots in front of the newly built national palace that soon became a site of public attraction. Angeline also remembered having her picture taken by some tourists while her brothers were not watching, and being told to smile. She loved going for walks on the Champ-de-Mars. She remembered the mixed emotions when the Marines left—how her dad and his friends were ecstatic, while others who benefited from their presence were visibly saddened.

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Seated by her favorite window that afternoon, Angeline remembered the strange sight of a flock of birds flying north, and then an empty sky. Amidst the normal noises came a series of loud, sudden reverberations down from the hill towards the port, followed by billows of dust. Suddenly, she noticed a red car speeding toward the adjacent wall and crash. The street vendors panicked, dropped their wares and ran. Immediately she felt the violent undulations as if bobbing on giant waves inside a canoe. As she fought to hold on to the wooden pole by the window frame, she saw her husband in the middle of the floor screaming for his long-deceased mother. Confusion, dust, and raucous noises filled her head as she tried to make sense of it all. She had felt the movement of the earth when she was younger, but had never experienced the wild bucking movement underneath and all around her. Then an eerie silence befell the city as if thousands of ghosts had invaded her street. Avenue Christophe was silent, Port-au-Prince was silent—consumed with a silence that Angeline had not heard since Papa Doc's night curfews.

Angeline slowly rose up and re-centered herself, aligned to her husband's painful groans coming from the floor in the left corner of the room. He was completely immobile. Shards of old ceramic plates, cups, glasses and saucers were strewn all over the unpolished wooden floor. Death flashed in front of her eyes, her heart palpitated, and then started racing as she thought of the mayhem that engulfed the city after Baby Doc fled in 1986. Burning tires, hacked corpses—an atmosphere of fear overtook Port-au-Prince. She closed her eyes and tried to think of more pleasant thoughts, but the bawling cries of the passersby quickly brought her back to her morbid reality.

As her eyes furiously scanned the street, she realized that her neighbors' houses were flattened. A wild shriek leapt out of her mouth as she placed both hands behind her head and then over her mouth. She instinctively moved toward the back room on the right side of the house where a single-bed sized wooden bridge connected to the rear-adjointed house. A blast of needles stabbed her sight and a rush of heat streamed from the bottom of her belly up to her chest; she heaved, stumbled and released an animal-like sound she never thought herself capable of uttering. She thought it was impossible, perhaps a bad dream, or a daytime hallucination. She was unable to accept the sight.

Meanwhile, in massive pain, Theodore struggled to get up from the shard-filled floor and finally mustered the strength to grab one leg of a nearby table that had crashed against the antique china cabinet. When he finally reached the back room where Angeline was still groaning, he realized that the house where two of their great-grandchildren were sleeping was completely destroyed. No sign of their mother, no sign of the maid, and no sign of their youngest grandson. To Theodore, it was as if a bomb had been dropped. His oversized and slightly faded American uniform reminded him of Hiroshima and the apocalyptic images etched in his mind.

His fragile existence seemed to grind to a stop, his body stuttered, he could not move beyond the border of the wall, afraid to climb down the stairs, afraid to look at Angeline, the woman who was always

composed and took care of him. Theodore stood frozen and confused at the incoherent sounds all around him. Drowsiness filled his head and his vision blurred as tears engulfed his eyes, until they gushed out on his dusty and slightly bloodied face. Suddenly, he mumbled some rambling sounds and grunted as he dragged himself back toward Angeline. She grabbed him by the left shoulder and held on to him as they steadied themselves during the first aftershock. They both bawled out an elongated “woyii!” and Angeline crossed herself as the violent shaking subsided. To her surprise, Theodore who hadn’t spoken for over a month erupted into non-stop chatter about the bodies of his beloved great-grandchildren, crushed underneath the slabs.

“Theo, what are we going to do?” Angeline cried out as she held on tightly to her husband who carefully cradled his broken right elbow. Angeline remembered what she had quickly forgotten—how strong Theodore once was—as he leaned his body against her when the second aftershock shook the house.

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The frail back stairs stood lopsided like a bent accordion. Angeline’s timid steps inched like a toddler’s, and with each creak of the planks, a chord of fear struck at the center of her heart. She had to make her way to the adjoining collapsed house and hoped, just hoped, that everyone would be safe and perhaps standing outside. Maybe she would find them a bit dusty, or bruised, but safe; Angeline wanted for them to be safe. As she stepped out from the back door and rapidly surveyed all the collapsed houses, she immediately thought of the apocalypse. All of the block-built houses that she had seen erected over the years were on their knees, including those of her two grandsons’ families who lived on the first and second floors. She sobbed while her body moved slowly like an animal facing its slaughter. Angeline rocked her body back and forth. Her face made uncontrollable grimaces as disturbing images flashed and snapped in her cortex. Then, with a sudden and loud crash at the top left side of the house, she grabbed her head to stop the shooting needle-like pain that pierced the inside her of skull.

Mindless of her house robe and slippers, and also mindless of her Theodore, Angeline anxiously turned and ran toward the street where a large number of moving bodies were confusedly searching for loved ones. Angeline's voice joined the multitudes desperately asking: "Have you seen my grandson Edward?" The highways of voices crisscrossed each other as bits of "...have you seen...? have you seen?" looped and echoed through the dusty street.

LYONEL TROUILLOT

translated from the French by Gary Glück

LETTER TO A WOMAN WHO LIVES ON MY STREET

I

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By a most ordinary coincidence, you happen to live in another city, in a house on the same street and at the same number as the one I was born in. All that remained of my childhood home was a pile of rubble under which an old dog lived alone in exile. It's dangerous for a dog to frighten its masters. Had things unfolded normally, that dog would have died of loneliness, and the ruins crumbled under their own weight. But, as you know, the earthquake hurried many things to their end. The dog, the ruins and thousands of people. Here, at random, are some of the things that fell down or flew about: old ladies' dishes, relics of yesteryear's loves, lace and jewelry, photos of old lovers; books, knick-knacks, junk and airport novels; paintings, silliness, and masterpieces in the style popular during the jean-claudiste era (which arrogantly referred to itself as "the school of beauty") or in the realist tradition or even to the so-called "naïf" painters whose talent had supposedly come to them at night, from who knows where, at the dream-hour; guitars, the last pianos (still un-tuned because there were no professionals and because they had long ago become part of the backdrop of the households of the nouveau riche bourgeois and fallen aristocrats even though they provided no music in return); recorders and sketch pads that teachers still used in primary schools, despite themselves, ever since a course in art appreciation and culture had been introduced; the registers in which property titles are compiled, definitive tax returns; chandeliers; balconies; the white roof of the National Palace with the President's honor; the water towers suspended above the villas (those who were entitled to water stored it in water towers, everyone else traveled miles to find it); the luxury hotels and houses of ill-repute; the official businesses of the city center whose owners do not always pay their taxes and the depots

containing the goods imported from Panama and the Dominican Republic by the *madan sara* who make up the business sector referred to as the “informal economy”; the benches on which school children had scratched the name of their first love or drawn a caricature of an old teacher with a compass point...We will never be able to tally up all of the things that were once part of our inner landscapes. It will also be difficult to get used to the new houses that will be built where the old ones no longer are. Houses die in peculiar ways too. Some simply slide into the street. They seem unharmed; they have simply moved. If you peer inside though, you will see the remains of a dining-room, of bedrooms, the debris of shattered children’s toys. Some lean, unsteady but cute, still refusing to go down. They are like a young girl who, feeling herself slip on the ballroom floor and fearing that she will be ridiculed if she falls, puts her hands to her sides to maintain a modicum of dignity, and seeks one last hold to grasp onto before falling. Others, stronger yet broken, battled in vain and clung to their foundations with the energy of desperation until a force greater than theirs forced them to lie down, belly exploded, poles split in two like the legs of a doll that a mean child has torn apart for pleasure. Yet others, caught off guard and lacking the pretty girl’s feel for aesthetics and the strength of the fighters, fell without knowing either how or why, stunned by the sound of their own collapse. And the screams. At first it was the sound of a city crashing down, then the endless scream rising from those on whom the city fell. I couldn’t tell you how many got back up. We will hear the screams for a long time. Even in the midst of silence.

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II

I think about you living in my street in another city. I think about the living. Usually, when someone close dies, part of us dies with them. We put the parts of ourselves back together and with what remains, bruised but compact, learn to live without that missing piece. When so many people die at the same time, colleagues and friends, lovers and neighbors, parents and children, that missing part is greater than what is left. No one has enough life in them to cry for so many dead. So, we choose to think of the living. I think about the living, about

the mutilated bodies. The human body is the most concrete example of beauty in this world and its mutilation is a sacrilege. There is a little girl in my neighborhood. One half of her face is alive and the other half is dead. Can she smile with half a face? I think about the bodies that survived the city's fall untouched. I watch the living walking in the streets. In general, I find them more likeable than I did yesterday. Not because they are more deserving. Some took on the stone and cement with their laborer hands, the hands of average citizens, to save lives. Some holding up a foreign passport or slipping their hand into a friend's handbag or a protector's wallet, hurried off to make a new life for themselves elsewhere. There were two young women I thought I knew, doctors, who tended to no one and moved away the next day. There was cowardice in white coats and courage among the anonymous. As he helped a neighbor he hardly knew rescue a family member from the ground floor of a tottering house about to come crashing down, one man said: "We will save them or we will die together." A street vendor from my neighborhood tried to sell the bread the corner baker gave out free. Heroes and scum. Humanity has always been everything and its opposite. The living are no better and no worse than they were before. They have become more likeable merely because we now share a prefix, a bizarre joint status: we are all survivors. I now have to guard against turning the fact of being alive into a virtue or a quality. There was no shameful death for the victims of the earthquake. But there are ways of surviving or of simply living that are more humane than others.

III

The guidelines stated no more than ten-thousand characters. I'm counting words. I don't know what the punch line will be. I don't even know what my original intent was. I'm speaking to you because you are far away. The people I love, the ones that witnessed the horror with me, prefer to talk about other things. In fact, as soon as you start writing, before or after the catastrophe, you always talk about something else. I just can't quite give this something else that is trying to find meaning a name. I know that I still have the same ideas about the urgency of experiencing happiness without limits and

about a fairer division of the world's wealth. Some people here had three houses, seven cars, banks, and accounts in other banks. Which of their houses killed their first child or their frail old mother? There are women whose bodies never knew pleasure. They died reluctant and under the thumb of a man and of customs that will survive them and entrap other women tomorrow. Death came and ended unhappy lives which will never get a chance to improve. Maybe I meant to speak to you about humility and the urgent need to find happiness for oneself and others. And also about what has remained unchanged. In the days that followed the earthquake, the whole city slept in the streets, in courtyards and in vacant lots. Today, I see people hurrying back to their homes, the ones that are still standing. They barricade themselves inside the way they used to and rebuild their little worlds. I also see those that will have to wait a very long time before having a roof over their heads. I still dream of houses with open doors. It was the dream I had before and it hasn't changed. Yes, from city to city, from my eighty-nine Rue Saint-Antoine, which collapsed on an exiled dog, to your apartment, same street same number in another city, I dream of open doors. Maybe that's what I wanted to talk to you about. In the name of the dead. And of the living. I may also have wanted to talk to you about dogs. They roamed Port-au-Prince in the evening. I don't see dogs anymore. They haven't run away. They've gone underground. It's proof of their loyalty to the city. I wanted to talk to you about the dogs that will wag their ghost tails for a long time to come, hidden under the ruins, underground surveyors of the city they love, Port-au-Prince, dead and alive.

JOUJOU TURENNE

translated from the French by Nataša Đurovičová

CRISSCROSSED THOUGHTS, ENTWINED PAINS

There is Haiti, its dead, its survivors;
There is my broken heart, the dreams that have fled;
There is the chaos in my head
There is also, and especially, the daily life.

There is solidarity...which gives strength, courage, hope.
There is hope...hope...hope
There is the need to get involved in this reconstruction movement,
But there is also the star-system that goes too far, I think...it all
seems like a glory pageant at times...
I wonder where all those interested will be in one month, two
months, one year, five years...twenty years...

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There are the adopting parents who don't understand why they must
keep waiting...
But there are, as well, and under everyone's noses, thefts of children
from Port-au-Prince while I'm writing these lines.

There is TV...
and then there is silence.

As I'm driving my car I can't understand why the apartment build-
ings are still standing...
A second later I remember I'm in Montreal,
even though my pain is taking me to Kiskeya.
Kiskeya...where each and every person has lost beings dear to him.

There is crying...sprinkled by a few smiles...laughter sometimes.
Yes, I cry.
I smile again

I laugh sometime
This is my everyday.

There is a manifold pain, layered inside Russian nesting dolls.
One of those dolls has an empty stomach,
Starved for dignity for my people, shown only for sensationalist im-
ages of horror...useless for grasping what is essential.
The essential of a pain colored by combativeness, by courage, by
boldness.

There are Americans practicing war medicine, amputating under
open skies.
There are dogs depressed by too much stench of death.
There is the night, the women, the girls, violated, raped.
There is that this isn't time for heartbreak.
This isn't the time for heartbreak.

There are my people, *mon peuple*, blood of my blood,
Burying their dead for now without a Requiem.

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Among them are helpers, foreign humanitarians
Who believed in a better Haiti.

There is...that Haiti's national palace is no more.
Part of my childhood has collapsed with it.
It was from here that I would hear the daily "*it is now eight o'clock
throughout our nation and land.*"

There are the resilient ones who run a household on \$5 a day
There is the restaurant owner who gives out free meals until his sup-
plies run out

Men anpil chay pa lou

Pain that is collective is easier to bear
And yet...

If I were a drinker, I'd have more than a few.
If I were a junkie, I'd get high as a kite.

All that's left now is a Requiem wept for the cadavers piled up in communal graves.

My dear soldiers, unknown soldiers, I weep for you, I sing for you, I dance for you...

I weep for you, I sing for you...

I prefer to weep, laugh, sing, write, dance and hope...

For in the distance children with a beating heart are waiting for a chance to live, not simply survive

That is a door I will not be closing...I'm only catching my breath for a moment.

I must reconquer the woman I had become...her body, her heart, her soul, her hopes, her dreams, her regrets

I must comfort the daughter of Haiti who has lost her loved ones

There is a schedule, there are timelines...

I must work.

Fortunately right now there are children filling me with tenderness.

I try to remind them that everyone is unique, special, a little diamond in their heart...

I tell them that together they are a bouquet of flowers...

So today my head is in bloom.

There is hope...tenderness

There is hope...tenderness.

There is hopefulness.

There are my herbs to stop the time.

There is my family, whom I love, and whose love for me is unlike any other.

My mother, making soup,
my father, present in his silence,

There is...

There is my brother, getting ready to leave for Kiskeya. Kiskeya where there is, amidst the ruins, the hope of saving a life, an arm,

a leg; my brother who steals time from time itself to allow us some tenderness

My sister, who just lost her best friend under the debris, and is holding up, and we reassure one another that we will not go under with pain, for her loss was mine as well....

There is my as-good-as-aunt, who calls from Miami in the middle of the night to say that she is alive... had managed to save herself from this carnage!

Intense joy.

Sobbing.

Profound joy.

Here is the human...

The great chain of humanity in its vibrancy, making me feel human...

There are friends here, being equally tested, and we share the everyday around a fast meal, a bit of small talk, a hug, a sob...then an x-rated joke...Yes! That too is what daily life is all about!

There are the friends from all over the globe who send me emails, and all of whom want to do something. And there is so much to do...and do again...

There is a rage to live around me.

I soak it in.

There is my rage to live!

There is my rage to live!

There is the entire fraternity and sorority raising their hands to be counted for Haiti, with us, with me.

The Madeleine Islands, Guyana, Guadeloupe, France, Mauritius...

There is Janou, Sylvain, France Lyse, Dominique, there's Lyse,

Tiny, Jude...

There is Jocelyn who sends me a postcard with a real stamp...

He doesn't do things the way others do, that sweet Jocelyn...he remains a child...he is special...with a diamond in his heart...

There is the twelve year old emerging from the ruins after eight days, her arms raised in a V for Victory.

There are all of you, with whom I want to share this text.

There still is life...

There is my breaking down...breaking down from tenderness...

There is friendship...

There is hope...hopefulness...

There are a million orphans.

There are survivors.

There is culture...writing.

There are living arts...vibrant arts.

There is the will to a better tomorrow.

There is, again and again, the rage to live!

The rage to live!

The rage to live!

Thanks for being here.

BEAUDELAINÉ PIERRE

translated from the French by Michel François

PORT-AU-PRINCE WILL RISE

I learned that, sooner or later, the tides would be unleashed. That that they always come unloosened. Secretly, inside me, I repressed the excitement of seeing the misfortune come. Wanting to face it. And, like Télumée, having the courage to hold on to the reins to the bitter end. Right before, I had been reading Simone Schwarz-Bart. I devoured the book page by page. The book also made me suffer. We tore each other up. With spite. This thought filled my head, and I hurt all over. My heart twisted with pain. My throat was tied in knots. My guts? None left. Ah, Télumée. You have always drained me of my self. You carried me, took me away; and I became like waves in the ocean. In my throat, my tears never ceased. My teeth clenched. My spit became blood. My muscles like ice. I stopped breathing. I went from battlefield to battlefield. I cried with you over your dead. My heart tore during the fire. And when love walked out on you, I too screamed. Aching. Spiteful. I hurt everywhere. But dammit! I loved that pleasure. For you always held the horse's bridle.

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I was re-reading you when it happened. My friend Pat told me. Over the phone. We were coming back from an amusement park. With my two children, Ann-Lyse and Max. My daughter loved that day; it was one of the nicest ones we'd had since she arrived in Minnesota in late December 2009. I had watched her happily swing on monkey bars. And my heart could not contain itself. I said to Pat, when Annie returns to Haiti, she will be asking her father to take her back here all the time. As if it was next door. The only dark moment so far was when I learned that an old comrade in the struggle had been murdered. But I had only just come to understand, thanks to you, Télumée, that all streams and rivers eventually lose themselves in the ocean. I was learning to live with my joys and my sorrows. I was giving myself over completely to this excursion.

Over the phone I heard “earthquake.” Didn’t see what was up. English is not my language. A good excuse, isn’t it. I am letting time pass. The time to understand that we are speaking of the same thing, Pat and I. Or time enough to discover miraculously that words could change meaning in an instant. But you have taught me, Téliumée, that even if words are sometimes stronger than we are, it is not against them that our war should be waged. Only later did I come to understand that my friend Anil dragged thousands of others into the grave with him. You always taught me to hold the reins firmly, Téliumée.

Then the bombardment began.

116 Earthquake over here. Earthquake over there. Port-au-Prince is collapsing. The pep vanyan, the strong people, are standing. The National Palace succumbs. The flag is holding up. The government is under the rubble. Préval has been trapped. Petion-Ville cannot hold on. Where are you Mr. President? 20,000.00 deaths. Who bids up? 100,000.00 200,000.00. Mr. Prime Minister has spoken. Help! The call is heartbreaking. The Friendly Countries rise to be counted. Help is organized. It is a feast of humanitarianism. Everything is there. Backpacks. Boats. Flags. Field hospitals. Our presence at the feast of the emergency must be guaranteed. Above all, to be the first to have arrived. It is politically correct. Long live the Olympics! No to occupation. No to slavery. Receivership? A nice word. But I don’t need it! CNN. Fox News. Internet. Twitter. FaceBook. Red Cross. Convoy. Packing food. Packing clothes. Disaster help. Help! Volunteer. Diaspora. Transfer. Money transfer. Child transfer. Child trafficking. Humanitarian assistance. Fundraising. May the devil take revenge! Letenel pifó, the Lord will prevail. It is also the voice of my people. Ungovernability. A stricken country. A poor country. Anmwé! SOS!! Jacmel. Petit Goâve. Everything is collapsing. Obama is standing up. So is Bush-Clinton. Préval rises again. Give responsibility to the irresponsible? Governing the ungovernable? Maybe yes. Maybe no. The entire world rises. Uncle Sam as the chief. The world’s first Black Republic must be saved!

And the horse rode on, here and there. Little by little, the reins

slipped from my hands. I let myself go. Just last year I said to my mother, suffering from diabetes and refusing to stick to her diet, “If you don’t do what’s needed, you won’t see your little granddaughter grow up.” Three months earlier, I had invited my father to come see me in Minnesota. A rare chance to get a tourist visa. I still hear him telling me over the phone, “Mwen pa ko ap mouri, m ap gen tan vwayaje. I ain’t dead yet, I’ll have time to travel.” Telling me he would live for a long time and would have time enough to see the land of Uncle Sam. The last time I heard my brother’s voice on the phone, he was getting ready to go to France. Just a hello. The call was dropped. Dreams? I had them. For my children. For myself. But the greatest one was to give back to my parents a little of what they had given to me. Has nature stolen my dreams? Has she taken away my friends?

Ah Télumée, even had we held on to the reins of the horse, nature would never give us back what it took away. No matter how strong we had been in the face of adversity, the memories are there to watch us and to remind us not to take too much pleasure in our little joys. The wait was interminable. No news. Complete silence. Fatal silence. What has become of them? Would I be lucky? What was it my God had spared me? Had I really been spared? And I kept coming back to you, Télumée. I always came back to you. I carried you in my shopping bag and we took the bus together. Coming and going. No sooner did I climb the steps of the bus that you swept me away, my eyes constantly dropping toward you. And the passengers next to me would never guess the paths down which we were riding even while the bus crept down University Avenue.

A pungent, pure smell of spices rose from the apartment. I set up the pot. I set it up again and again. The spices always came before the jerking. My sighs, too, blended in. I stirred. I moved and mixed, on and on. That was when I felt close to the three-legged stove and the coal burner. Then my pain disappeared in the tangy smell of the corn-and-beans I was cooking. That was, Télumée, when I saw you move joyfully forward. Facing fiercely the wind and the rain. Free of your two breasts. I realized at that moment that from the darkest shadows light can flow. Even if my light was yet to come.

“Annie...” There was still no information. Fear and guilt overtook me in turns. I looked at her. Soon to be four years old, my daughter. Her brother Max, at barely one, is content with food and cuddles. I owe Annie at least that. An explanation. That she should finally understand the silence about our preparations for the return to Haiti. So she would stop demanding constantly, “you have to buy me the Dora toothpaste to bring with me to Haiti.”

“You’ll stay a little bit longer here, with manmi, in the land of Obama.” And voilà! This was said with great remorse and a deliberate smile, to signal to her that everything was at its most normal. I had told her about the land of Obama. That is how she loved to name this country, where she was a visitor. I watched her, desperate to glimpse enough excitement to make her memories vanish. I could not tell her that the city where she was born had collapsed. Nor that her grandfather and grandmother were sleeping outside, under open sky. I suffered terribly for taking her away so abruptly from grandma and from Titit, from grandpa and auntie Lily. I’d like to think, Télumée, that I worried too much about the psychological state of my daughter and that she wouldn’t be missing her dearest friends all that much. But when I told her we were staying longer, she asked, “And auntie Lily, and auntie Titit?” The separation would not be without bruises. But since then, Télumée, I have been calling her “fanm vanyan,” strong woman.

I read you again as the smell of roasted peas was rising from the pot. The peas were rattling, jumping, changing sound second by second. I felt my spirit detach from my body and take off into the air. The water in the pot was dancing, trembling, stirring my soul within. You turned yourself upside down in crazy laughter; I told myself, so this is what it means to be free! The wind itself and the rain could not hold back that powerful burst of invincible laughter. We rode together, like corn dancing in step with the peas moving the pot. And under your woman’s skirt I saw Fon Zombi reborn from his pains and calamities. I heard my daughter asking, “what’s a fanm vanyan?” The heavens opened and, riding my horse, all Port-au-Prince rushed before my eyes. While I gripped the reins, its palace and its lights, its

fanm vanyan, its well-turned-out boys walking tall beneath the sun. As if to say, in vain will life drop on them its thunders, its gales and its storms, in vain it will cover them with the dust from its hoofs, they will never let go.

That is how life goes, dear Téliumée. So it goes, under the sun. One day, it tears up our guts and all is nil. Another day it offers us the happiness of heaven, and no one is happier than we are, no one. But in the final count we look at ourselves and say, whatever may happen, it will all end well. People come and go. They are born and they die. All is constructed and deconstructed. Port-au-Prince must renew itself.

It has its place among the stars.

CONTRIBUTORS

Raoul Bourdeau Altidor se otè twa rekèy pwezi, *Koulè Midi*, *Sinbad Avenue* ak *Zing Zing Madan Jede*. Li se yon reprezantan nasyonal Federasyon Ameriken Pwofesè (AFT). L ap viv nan New York.

Raoul Bourdeau Altidor is the author of three poetry books, *Koulè Midi*, *Sinbad Avenue* and *Zing Zing Madan Jede*. He is also a national representative of the American Federation of Teachers. He lives in New York.



Bonel Auguste est né à Port-au-Prince en 1973. Il est à la fois poète, journaliste, bibliothécaire, animateur culturel et fondateur de l'atelier de poésie Dimanche en poésie à la bibliothèque Étoile filante. Il écrit en français et en créole.

Bonel Auguste, born in Port-au-Prince in 1973, is a poet, a writer, a journalist, a librarian, and the founder of the “Dimanche en poésie” workshop affiliated with the “Étoile filante” library. He writes in French and in Creole.



Chenald Augustin est né en Haïti en 1978. Il travaille comme journaliste au quotidien *Le Nouvelliste*. Il est l'auteur d'un recueil de poèmes, *Clair de précipices intérieurs*, paru en 2004, aux éditions Voix des encres.

Chenald Augustin was born in Haiti in 1978, and is currently a journalist at the daily *Le Nouvelliste*. His poetry volume *Clair de précipices intérieurs* appeared in 2004.



Tout à la fois poète, écrivain, orateur, acteur et personnage excentrique, **Dominique Batrville** investit de façon anarchique l'absurde, la folie, le comique et la lumière parfois joyeuse de son île natale. Le mode d'écriture de ce poète-marcheur est inextricablement lié au voyage, à l'utopie insulaire, à l'intention sacrée ou cosmique.

Dominique Batrville is a poet, writer, speaker, actor and eccentric. In a sometimes-anarchic manner he investigates the absurdity, the madness, the comedy and the occasionally joyful light of his native island. The mode of writing of this poet-walker is inextricably tied to journeys, to the utopian quality of islands, and to the intention of the sacred or the cosmic.



Edwidge Danticat was born in Haiti, moving to the United States when she was twelve. She is the author of several award-winning novels, including *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, *Krik? Krak!*, *The Farming of Bones*, and *The Dew Breaker*, and of three books for young adults and children. She is also the editor of *The Butterfly's Way: Voices from the Haitian Diaspora in the United States* and *The Beacon Best of 2000: Great Writing by Men and Women of All Colors and Cultures*. Her 2007 memoir *Brother, I'm Dying*, was a finalist for the National Book Award and the winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for autobiography. Her most recent book, *Create Dangerously*, is a collection of essays.



Valerie Deus, born of Haitian parents, is originally from New York and now teaches English at Minneapolis Community and Technical College. She holds an MA in Creative Writing from Long Island University's Brooklyn Campus.



Gaspard Dorelien est né en Haïti en 1978. Il a fait des études en Communication sociale à l'Université d'Etat d'Haïti et en cinématographie au New York Film Academy. Il compte à son actif trois publications, dont deux recueils de poèmes.

Gaspard Dorelien was born in Haiti in 1978. He has studied communications at the University of Haiti and filmmaking at New York Film Academy. He is the author of three volumes of writing, of which two are collections of poems.



Fortestson 'Lokandya' Fenelon se yon powèt, komedyen, jounalis, metè-an-sèn, dizè, desinatè. Li pibliye de liv pwezi *Nuits à deux battants*, *Pwent tete solèy*. Li ap viv Florida.

François Fenelon is an actor, a comedian and a poet. Writing in both Creole and French, he is the author of two volumes of poetry, *Nuits à deux battants* and *Pwent tete solèy*. He lives in Florida.



Yanick Lahens vit en Haiti. Elle est auteure de nouvelles, de romans et de travaux critiques sur la littérature et la société haitiennes dans des revues haitiennes et étrangères. Son premier roman *Dans la maison du père* (2000) a reçu le prix LiBeraturpreis en Allemagne. Son second roman *La couleur de l'aube* a obtenu quatre prix: le Prix Millepages Littérature française 2008, le Prix Richelieu de la Francophonie en mars 2009, le prix RFO en novembre 2009 et le Prix des lecteurs de la ville de Vincennes en septembre 2010. Yanick Lahens a été membre du premier Conseil de Direction élu de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure et y a enseigné.

Yanick Lahens, a novelist, short story writer and critic, lives in Haiti, publishing both there and abroad. Her first novel, *Dans la maison du pere* (2000) received the 2002 LiBeraturpreis award in Germany; the second, *La couleur de l'aube* (2008) has received a number of awards for French and Francophone literature. Lahens has been on faculty and on the advisory council for the Ecole Normale Supérieure.



Joël Lorquel est né à Port-au-Prince en 1964. Il a publié: *Télé Haïti victime de la barbarie lavalassienne* (2004); *Récit d'un voyage en Turquie, Israël et Palestine*, *Marcher sur les pas du Christ* (2003) et *L'Eglise du Nazaréen, 50 ans de mission Haïti/ l'Eglise d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (2000). Il collabore avec plusieurs journaux de la capitale dont *Le Nouvelliste*, *Le Matin* et *Haïti en Marche*. Il est aussi l'éditeur de la revue publicitaire mensuelle gratuite *Le Guide des Consommateurs* et fondateur l'Imprimerie Media-Texte en 1994.

Joël Lorquet was born in Port-au-Prince in 1964. Among his writings are *L'Eglise du Nazaréen, 50 ans de mission Haïti/ l'Eglise d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (2000), *Récit d'un voyage en Turquie, Israël et Palestine, Marcher sur les pas du Christ* (2003) and *Télé Haïti victime de la barbarie lavalassienne* (2004). He contributes to a number of newspapers in Haiti, among them *Le Nouvelliste*, *Le Matin* and *Haiti en Marche*. A founder of a printing house, he also edits an advertising magazine.

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Formée en biochimie, à l'Université de Bordeaux et à CUNY, **Lucie M. C. Paul-Austin**, devient Chargée de cours à l'Université d'Etat d'Haïti (UEH). De 1986 à 2003, elle a contribué à la mise en place de nombreuses organisations et groupes de réflexions, dont l'Association des Professeurs de l'Enseignement Supérieur (Apesup) et le Collectif pour l'Université et la Démocratie. Entre 1996-2003, L. Paul Austin est à la fois, directrice générale du Ministère à la Condition Féminine, déléguée-principale auprès de la CIM/OEA, et Ministre de l'Education. Depuis août 2007, elle entreprend des études de doctorat en lettres, au département de Français à CUNY, où elle enseigne également.

A biochemist by training, **Lucie M. C. Paul-Austin** has until 2005 taught at US and Haitian universities. During the years 1986 to 2003 she has also administered a wide range of political, civic and international organizations in Haiti, eventually directing the country's Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports. At present she is completing a Ph.D. in French at CUNY.

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Beudelaine Pierre est l'auteure de *Testaman* (2002), premier prix du Concours de Roman en Créole du journal *Bon Nouvèl*. Elle a également écrit de nombreuses nouvelles et son récent roman, *La négresse de Saint-Domingue* est paru en mai 2011 chez les Editions l'Harmattan. Pierre accorde une place importance dans ses écrits à la construction historique, dont l'enjeu principal est identitaire.

Beudelaine Pierre is the author of *Testaman* (2002), which won the prize of the daily *Bon Nouvèl* for the best novel in Creole, and of *La negresse de Saint*

Domingue (2011), as well as of a number of short stories. In her work, Pierre emphasizes constructions of history as principal sources of identity.



Claude Bernard Sérant est journaliste et travaille au journal *Le Nouvelliste* depuis 1994. Il a publié *Juste pour s'amuser, Rien que pour un instant, La soupe au giraumon de grann adé*. Depuis le tremblement de terre du 12 janvier 2010, il s'intéresse davantage aux problèmes des sinistrés entassés dans des camps de fortune.

Claude Bernard Sérant has been a journalist at the daily *Le Nouvelliste* since 1994. He is the author of *Juste pour s'amuser, Rien que pour un instant* and *La soupe au giraumon de grann adé*. Since the earthquake of 1/12/2010 he has focused on writing about the situation of those surviving in the refugee camps.



Patrick Sylvain teaches Haitian language and culture at Brown University and is a language coach at Harvard. A writer, social critic, and photographer, he has published in anthologies, journals and reviews including *Haiti Noir, Human Architecture: A Sociology Journal* and *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Verse*. He is a frequent contributor to the *Boston Haitian Reporter*, and a broadcast media commentator.



Né à Port-au-Prince (Haïti) le 31 décembre 1956, **Lyonel Trouillot** a fait des études de droit. Fasciné par la littérature depuis son plus jeune âge, il a collaboré à différents journaux et revues d'Haïti et de la diaspora dans lesquels il a publié de nombreux poèmes et textes critiques; il a également écrit des textes de chansons interprétées par Tambou Libète, Manno Charlemagne, Toto Bissainthe, Jean Coulanges et Atis Endepandan. Professeur de littérature, journaliste, co-fondateur des revues *Lakansyèl, Tèm* et *Langaj*, Lyonel Trouillot est aujourd'hui membre du Collectif de la revue Cahiers du Vendredi et co-directeur de la collection du même nom.

Lyonel Trouillot was born in Port-au-Prince in 1956. A law school graduate, he wrote extensively on literary topics for newspapers and magazines in Haiti and in the Diaspora; he has also written lyrics for Tambou Libète, Manno Charlemagne, Toto Bissainthe, Jean Coulanges and Atis Endepandan. He is a professor of literature at several of Haiti's universities, a journalist, the co-founder of magazines *Lakansyèl*, *Tèm* and *Langaj*, a member of the collective Cahiers du Vendredi and the co-director of its book series.

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Joujou Turenne, *Amie du Vent*, est auteure, conteuse, comédienne et conférencière inspirée par ses filiations africaines et caribéennes et les mille textures du Québec où elle vit. Elle a plusieurs publications à son actif dont *Contes de Joujou; Le vent de l'amitié*, album avec CD (2010); *Contes à rebours, voyages dans un espace nomade*, livre avec CD (Montréal, 2009); *Ti Pingé*, album avec cd bilingue (français-anglais) (Montréal, 2006) et *Joujou, Amie du vent*, recueil de contes du CIDICHA (Québec, 1998).

Joujou Turenne is an author, actress and a speaker inspired by her African and Caribbean filiations and the thousand textures of Québec, where she lives. She has a number of publications and CD recordings, among them *Contes de Joujou. Le vent de l'amitié; Contes à rebours, voyages dans un espace nomade, Ti Pingé, Joujou*, and *Amie du vent*. She was *Passé Tourelle* in *Passé Partout*, the popular TV series for children.

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Joëlle Vitiello is professor of French and Francophone Studies at Macalester College (St. Paul, MN). Her work on contemporary Haitian literature has appeared in *Présence Francophone, Etudes littéraires, Cultures Sud, LittéRéalités, Journal of Haitian Studies*, and in the collection *Ainsi parla l'oncle/ Revisiter l'Oncle: Jean Price-Mars*, (Montréal: 2009), and elsewhere. With Susanne Rinne, she is the co-editor of *Elles écrivent des Antilles* (Haïti, Guadeloupe, Martinique) (Paris: 1997).