

CHAPTER 13

CREATE DANGEROUSLY: A POETICS OF WRITING AS MEMORIAL ART; THE TEXT AS ECHO

CHAMBER

Anja Bandau

Published shortly after the earthquake in January 2010, the essays compiled under the title *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Writer at Work* delve into the poetics of writing in situations of sheer survival. Danticat reflects on her introductions to literature at the Brooklyn Public Library, writing,

Inasmuch as our stories are the bastard children of everything that we have ever experienced and read, my desire to tell some of my stories in a collaged manner, to merge my own narratives with the oral and written narratives of others, begins with my reading of the two books I eagerly checked out from the Livres Haïtiens section of the Brooklyn Public Library.¹

Resembling a number of established Haitian writers (Yanick Lahens, Dani Laferrière, Kettly Mars) in their intent to voice and articulate their struggle with the (im)possibility of their modes of fiction, Edwidge Danticat's fiction comes to a halt as she reflects on writing and creativity in the face of massive destruction. Linking this moment to different traumatic events in Haitian history, the essays explore what modes of writing literature can engage in under the conditions of dictatorship, oppression, and other forms of life-threatening violence (such as an earthquake). As Danticat unfolds her very own approach to the problem of how to speak of the unspeakable, of traumatizing events, her essays also point to more general issues of aesthetic imagination. Caribbean writers have provided prolific reflections on the link between art, society, history, and memory.² One might allude to the generation of independence, which addressed the "loss of history, the amnesia" and countered it with "imagination as necessity, as invention":³ Wilson Harris⁴ put forward "creative imagination" and the notion of limbo as space in-between, as a bridging that symbolizes fragmentation and rearrangement. More recently, Edouard Glissant's *Poétique de la relation* (1990) incorporated invisible ties, traces, as well as archipelagic thinking (Brathwaite)⁵ and transformed them into a Caribbean cultural

¹Edwidge Danticat, *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 62.

²Christoph Singler and Anja Bandau, "Fictions dans les Caraïbes: de la mémoire culturelle à la globalisation," in *Fictions et Cultures*, ed. Anne Duprat and Françoise Lavocat (Paris: SFLGC, 2010), 230.

³Derek Walcott, "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 16, no. 1 (1974): 6.

⁴Harris Wilson, *Tradition, the Writer and Society* (London: New Beacon, 1967).

⁵Kamau Brathwaite, *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

theory. In a polemic and tongue-in-cheek manner, Dany Laferrière's *Je suis un écrivain japonais* expresses a diasporic, migrant's position of creation, that is, a mobile position of identity. The list is far from complete but it shows that this Caribbean tradition to think about the relation between memory, history, and the role of art as imagination is predominantly masculine. This is the case, if we do not consider the more subtle poetics of female writers such as Maryse Condé or Jamaica Kincaid, imbedded in their fictional and essay writing. The more implicit modes of aesthetic reflection these writers engage in refer us to the gendered conditions of writing. Female authors in the Haitian literary tradition speak of their situation as internal exile due to the conditions of writing in a male-dominated intellectual space⁶ to which access is regulated both by a concept of the writer's subject creating from a position of authority and individuality, differing from their own, and by certain literary modes that claim such authority. In the very specific post-2010 moment, Danticat publishes her compilation of essays with the programmatic subtitle "The immigrant artist at work," explicitly linking two essential conditions of her creativity as an author: the precarious position of writing from outside, from a distance (diaspora), and the position of the author or intellectual in the Haitian society in situations of violence. Nadège Clitandre observes that these positionings are inevitably gendered as Danticat uses the term "immigrant" in contrast to the privileged notion of exile used by male writers.⁷

I would like to position my reading of Edwidge Danticat's essays against this background and discuss the relation between the diasporic position of the writer, questions of bearing witness, that is in particular the mode of testimonial writing and the place of the literary in this constellation, all coming together in Danticat's notion of memorial art. With this emphasis I coincide with John Dayan's observation that the entire collection's concern is how memorial art ensures the "saving act of commemoration."⁸

The act of bearing witness in the post-earthquake situation implicates the act of speaking for a community or a communal matter, a discussion that Gayatri Spivak has raised as crucial in relation to the ability and the right of the postcolonial writer to speak for his or her community. The tradition of testimonial writing in Latin America⁹ that I see present in Danticat's text also takes the question of representation of subaltern positions center stage: The complex question whose voice and testimony is authorized through the text points to the differences in access to the public space. This chapter discusses, then, the relation between the notion of memorial art, the image of the echo chamber, and the mode of testimonial writing in Danticat's writing. After presenting the essays as a hybrid form that uses the anecdotal mode to present (forgotten) historical events and a variety of aspects related through analogy in the first section, I then pass on to the second section that discusses the poetics of "create dangerously," a notion taken from Albert Camus. It evolves around the relationship between art and the political that—for Danticat—is unfolding as a question of choice and disobedience.¹⁰ This relationship is

⁶See Nadège T. Clitandre, *Edwidge Danticat: The Haitian Diasporic Imaginary* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018), 11–12.

⁷Ibid.

⁸See Colin Dayan, "Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work. Edwidge Danticat. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010. (Book review)," *New West Indian Guide* 85, nos. 3–4 (2011): 266.

⁹See Georg M. Gugelberger, *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

¹⁰See Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 5sq.

triggered by what the author calls her creation myth¹¹—haunting and obsessive stories “beyond the scope of [one’s] own life.”¹² The third and fourth sections discuss the diasporic condition and a (trans)national literary tradition that are established introducing the notion of memory. The fifth section examines Danticat’s image of an echo chamber in that many different voices become interwoven as her appropriation of the testimonial writing mode. In the final section, the notion of memorial art acquires a more comprehensive meaning pointing toward its dimension beyond language, the visual. I will show how—at the brink of speechlessness—images become counterpoint to and replacement for words.

Danticat’s Use of the Essay: Structure and Modes of Writing in the Essayistic Genre

The programmatic introductory essay “Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work” originates from a lecture that was inspired by Albert Camus’s “The artist and his time” (*L’artiste et son temps*)¹³ and was held at the Toni Morrison lecture series at Princeton University, March 25, 2008. Several articles were ones that Edwidge Danticat first published in *Time Magazine*, the *New Yorker*, *The Progressive*, and *Miami Herald* between 1999 and 2010. They provide the basis for the remaining chapters. Danticat wrote some essays specifically for this publication.¹⁴ All these texts are linked by the overarching question of how to create in situations of violence, of threats against individual and collective existence. The compilation’s manifesto-like character becomes clear. Events and stories appear in a new light as they are reread from a post-earthquake angle. The dedication to the victims of the earthquake of January 12, 2010, “two hundred thousand and more,” explicitly sets this tone. The book’s epigraph is taken from Maya Deren’s famous account on Haitian vodou *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haïti*,¹⁵ more precisely, the opening section of its first chapter, “The point of departure.” In the quote, Deren connects myth as “fiction of beginnings,” told in the past tense, and its celebration in the present, a specific reenactment of that myth, linking memory to the present¹⁶ and setting a frame for the essays and poetical inquiries that follow (memorial art keeps things alive). As Dayan¹⁷ points out, Danticat teaches her readers a lesson in how to engage with the dead, the lost, discarded, depending on “marked moments of intense ordinariness”¹⁸ and Vodou having a part in it. In *Create Dangerously*, Danticat constructs a constellation of texts that excavate the forgotten, deal with the complexity of coming into existence, and address the possibility of working through traumatic events and the difficulty of grasping errant memory (*mémoire errante*). Danticat reflects on the possibilities of representing testimony, the necessity of memory, and the power of images that provide media coverage. The hybrid genre of the essay weaves together discursive, narrative, lyrical fragments of memory, momentary images

¹¹Ibid., 5.

¹²Ibid., 7.

¹³Albert Camus, “L’artiste et son temps,” in *Discours de Suède* (Paris: Gallimard, 1958).

¹⁴See Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 175sq.

¹⁵Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haïti* (Kingson, NY: McPherson, [1953] 2004).

¹⁶Ibid., 22.

¹⁷Dayan, “Create dangerously,” 265–339.

¹⁸Ibid., 266.

similar to documentary photography, allowing the author to explore the border space between journalism, fiction, testimony, and memorial art.

Danticat's essays evoke hidden moments of Haitian history and perspectives on more prominent ones, such as the bicentenary of Haitian independence, violence in Haiti since Duvalier, events such as 9/11, hurricane Katrina, or archetypal situations of the diasporic (the plane ride between Port-au-Prince and Miami) and crucial moments in family life (such as birth and death). They portray Haitian artists and intellectuals such as the famous radio presenter Jean Dominique, photographer Daniel Morel, and painter Jean-Michel Basquiat, as well as Alerte Bélance, who witnessed violence after the coup against Aristide, among others. With the help of photographs, biographical episodes, and orally transmitted stories in personal conversations, the texts reconstruct a network of places, situations, and martyr figures that all share the experience of exile.

The essay-chapters pinpoint small incidents, anecdotes that represent the entanglement of politics, history, art, and literature of Haiti, individual history, reading, and encounters with family and friends inside and outside Haiti. Resembling snapshots, they capture episodes, feelings, atmospheres; they gather voices that narrate unknown, unexpected, and seemingly second-rate details as they gain central significance. The essay, a subjective, non-fictional, personal and informal genre is characterized by a reflective mode, drawing on older texts and texts from other authors. To this practice of including texts by other women writers—as highlighted in a feminist essay tradition¹⁹—I return in the fourth section. The essay relies on discursive as well as narrative passages and oftentimes circular forms of reasoning, linking exposition and coda. An apparatus of references is set up in the index and acknowledgments—establishing a network of thought and writerly tradition.

The anecdote is a structural element of the essay; it implies, even in written form, a strong aspect of orality.²⁰ The specific link between the literary and the referential, the representational and the factual world of events, of event and context, as well as the posture of reflexivity in the storytelling²¹ guarantee the anecdote's special effect. In historiography as well as in journalism, the anecdote functions as a reference to the factual, to historic episodes, individuals, and events that often illuminate conditions of crisis. The anecdote delivers a point often linked to a violation of common conventions, considered legitimate by writer and reader.²² A number of Danticat's essays show the surprising turn of an argument, revealing an unexpected meaning in a symbol (e.g., "The Other Side of the Water," "Bicentennial," or "Flying Home"). The essay texts end with a sudden twist of the story, often in the last sentence. As in historiography, anecdotes represent the seemingly insignificant, telling example. Whether it is the hidden and disquieting parallels between the United States and Haiti in crisis management after a natural disaster in "Another Country," aiming to view Haiti as not exceptional, or the old aunt who

¹⁹As an introductory reading see Diane P. Freedman, *An Alchemy of Genres: Cross-Genre Writing by American Feminist Poet-Critics* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992) as well as Ruth-Ellen Boettcher Joeres and Elizabeth Mittman, eds., *The Politics of the Essay: Feminist Perspectives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). Gloria Anzaldúa's aesthetic of hybridizing genres in her seminal *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1986) was a reference for numerous female authors from the 1990s onward considered back then under the label of ethnic minority literature.

²⁰Ernst Rohmer, Artikel "Anekdote," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, vol. 1, ed. Gert Ueding (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1992), 569.

²¹See *ibid.*, 566.

²²See *ibid.*, 570.

lost her son “Lòt bò dlo,” the “other side of the water” in the diaspora.²³ This mode of writing participates in unraveling received notions and master narratives, and reveals ties, unexpected and exemplary at the same time, that facilitate new perspectives on Haiti and Haitian culture. Danticat weaves together her multifaceted readings of Haitian and non-Haitian literature to form a canvas of voices that complement, comment, and put into perspective the testimonies gathered in her reportages.²⁴ I will discuss this technique, of utmost importance for Danticat’s poetics, in the fourth and fifth sections, referring to the image of echo chamber that in Danticat’s use is closely linked to her testimonial mode of writing. Important in this context is also the work of translation (Creole and French into English)—addressed and practiced throughout the essays, bearing witness to acts of translation of Edwidge Danticat’s own story into French or Creole.

A further characteristic of the essay is analogical thinking that establishes links between global and local history and literature. By way of establishing a parallel to Albert Camus’s oeuvre and his notion of an art inserted into its time, the author generates a crucial connection for her own argument, which I will return to in the next section. Another crucial literary tradition, magical realism, and its founding narrative are introduced in Chapter Seven, “Bicentennial,” where Danticat binds together two founding myths that keep reminding the reader of the formative power of (literary) discourse. Her essay alludes to the “silenced” historical event—the country’s coming into existence by the Haitian Revolution and its late recognition on one hand and links it to what is considered one of magical realism’s first manifestos. In the famous prologue to one of the most widely read novels on the Haitian Revolution, Alejo Carpentier’s *El reino de este mundo*, the Cuban author situates the magic real in the religious expressions of indigenous and African descendent cultures that he defines as source for creativity and conceives as genuinely Caribbean and Latin American mode of writing. Here, the practice of constituting meaning through the process of establishing analogies inscribes Haitian sociocultural production onto the global map.

Danticat’s Poetics of Creating Dangerously and Its Genealogy

In her introductory essay, Danticat takes up the notion of an art inserted into its time (*un art embarqué*), which Albert Camus brought forward in his speech “L’artiste et son temps,” given at Uppsala University shortly after his Nobel prize lecture in December 1957.²⁵ The dialogue with Camus evolves out of a shared experience of devastating totalitarianism, a diasporic position²⁶

²³Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 94.

²⁴Danticat herself refers to different parts in *Create Dangerously* as “reportage” (see Elvira Pulitano, “An Immigrant Artist at Work: Conversation with Edwidge Danticat,” *Small Axe* 36, vol. 15, no. 3 (2011): 58).

²⁵In English the title is changed from “The Artist and His Time” to “Create Dangerously,” a phrase taken from the speech. The English translator Justin O’Brien translated the key notion *embarqué* with “impressed,” even “embarked,” and—more appropriate from my point of view—with “inserted into its time” (in “The Wager of our Generation”). The opposition between *embarqué* and *engagé* translates into “inserted” versus “committed,” voluntary versus compulsory. Cf. Albert Camus, “The Wager of our Generation,” Interview in Demain, October 24–30, 1957, in Albert Camus, *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 237–48; and Albert Camus, “Create Dangerously,” in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death* (New York, Vintage Books, 1995), 249–72.

²⁶Camus’s French-Algerian status is of course different from Danticat’s Haitian-American position of enunciation, as his context is that of the *colon*.

in Francophone culture, as well as Western literary tradition and, more specifically, out of the shared interest in the artist's role in their respective times and societies. According to Camus, the artist cannot just be silent or talk about something other than the pressing matters of his time. Camus sees the artist involved in these inevitable issues. He places the artist "in the arena of the circus of history" and not among the ranks of spectators.²⁷ To him, diverging from Jean Paul Sartre's notion of *littérature engagée* (1947), the artist's role is not a question of commitment, not an act of will. So, for Camus, "to create today is to create dangerously."²⁸ The imperative of taking a stance in the face of a violent social reality implies various challenges that affect not only the status of art in the community but also the definition of art in general. Danger not only concerns the artist's life but also the artist's choice on the nature of his or her art. An artist's responsibility lies within his or her commitment to an art free of doctrines: neither art for art's sake nor an ideologically tainted realism. The artist must realize that his struggle for a certain form of art is a struggle for his place in society and it leads to the crucial question how, in the midst of all ideologies, the freedom of creation—*l'étrange liberté de la création*²⁹—becomes possible and secure. This freedom Camus sees in the service to those populations who suffer and for whom the artist must speak. Danticat translates the concept into the Haitian political and cultural context of dictatorship and suggests, again referring to Camus, whose notion of *l'homme revolté* we have in mind,³⁰ that "creation as a revolt against silence" means "disobedience" in a situation where both, "creation and reception," are "dangerous undertakings."³¹ So, memorial art in this sense means commemorating the silenced/ the threatened by silence. Here a whole network of writers enters the picture—familiar with the creative conditions under oppressive regimes, creating art from eccentric positions such as the marginal, the minoritarian, the diasporic, exile, and/or providing primal scenes that testify to the possibilities of literature. They feed Danticat's reflections on creation, creativity, and on how to become involved in the matters of her community and country. Danticat, the essayist, initiates this affiliation with different authors through the rereading of their texts and by establishing new, unexpected connections, thus forging a literary tradition of her own: a transnational literary history. Besides Camus, whose poetic reflections bring a tradition of critical realists such as Tolstoi into view, authors from Greek classicism such as Sophocles are reread from a postcolonial perspective. Characters such as Antigone are appropriated and shed light on exemplary situations and primal scenes. Tony Morrison, Zora Neale Hurston, and Alice Walker point to the African American, the African Diaspora experience. Gabriel García Márquez and Alejo Carpentier are introduced to highlight the link to a Latin American and Caribbean literary cosmos and a mode of literary representation associated with *lo real maravilloso* (the marvelous real) and magical realism. In establishing these multifaceted ties

²⁷ Albert Camus, "L'artiste et son temps," in *Discours de Suède* (Paris: Gallimard, 1958), 26 (my translation).

²⁸ Danticat, "Create Dangerously," 251. In the original French version: "Créer aujourd'hui, c'est créer dangereusement" (Camus, "L'artiste et son temps," 28).

²⁹ Camus, "L'artiste et son temps," 29.

³⁰ Although Danticat gives her readers one specific text as reference, clearly more texts and notions of Camus come to mind. The interview with Camus, "The Wager of Our Generation," conducted by the French magazine *Demain* in 1957 and published together with the speech under the title of *The Artist and His Time*, has to be considered as further intertext. The same is true of other essays in the volume containing those texts, which Camus himself believed the most important to appear in English translation. I mention only two further titles: "Defense of Freedom" "Pessimism and Tyranny."

³¹ Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 11.

into multiple literary traditions, Danticat establishes her memorial art not as hermetic and monological but as interconnected and transnational.

Danticat follows Camus's poetic conviction that places images at the origin of creativity and develops a point of departure based on "stirring" images. At the heart of what Danticat calls her creation myth, she evokes a scene that opens the book and resurfaces various times throughout it: the images of the public execution of Marcel Numa and Louis Drouin, political activists but also writers, taken from the visual account of a propaganda film made by Duvalier's regime in 1964. Members of the group *Jeune Haïti*, the two young men returned from exile in New York to Haiti to fight the dictatorship of Duvalier. After the failure of their plans and their arrest, Duvalier's propaganda tried to refute their patriotism immediately and declared them foreign rebels. In her approach to these foundational images, Danticat draws on Deren's *Divine Horsemen* (present in the epigraph) to explore the meaning of such a story of beginnings. In this foundational myth, the exiled are punished for disobedience; in Danticat's remembrance this act of disobedience and punishment gains the status of a haunting symbol and a trigger of creation (see last section of this chapter). As Marcel Numa's and Louis Drouin's life stories lead far beyond the dimension of the private, Danticat's creative myth "exists beyond the scope of [her] own life."³² On different levels, Danticat invests this incident with meaning: the status of images in the initiation of creation, the link between patriotism and exile, the threat of silence (ultimately through death) that violence brings to creativity.

"The Immigrant Artist at Work"—Creating from a Diasporic Situation

The visual account of the execution of these young patriots, emigrants, and writers alludes to the link between exile and creation. When mortal danger exists for whoever speaks up in public, how can one live and continue to create? Their brutal exclusion from the national community as "good-for-nothing blans (blancs)"³³ establishes a discontinuity between people in the diaspora and Haiti that disqualifies the intellectual voice from the diaspora. Danticat interprets the case of Marcel Numa and Louis Drouin as the possible reason behind her parents and many others leaving the country, for her life in the diaspora.³⁴ It becomes a founding scene of diasporic existence under Duvalier, its justification, the birth of the insider/outsider paradigm and significant for Danticat's own confrontation with the entanglements of politics, creation, and exile that the immigrant artist experiences.³⁵ By working through this primal scene from different angles, the author connects diasporic creation (precarious in the sense of a distance, a mnemonic void, a nonaffiliation, and in consequence the threat of de-authorization) and creation in the home country (precarious because of the brutal repression of freedom of expression under the Duvalier dictatorship as well as during post-dictatorial times), as both tend to restrict artistic creation. Danticat reunites these two conditions in one genealogy of the "precarious," a vital danger that continuously points back to Haiti. These constellations

³²Ibid., 7.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., 14.

³⁵See the first chapter of Clitandre, *Edwidge Danticat*, for the development of Haitian immigration from the period of Duvalier's dictatorship onward, the insider/outsider paradigm in Haiti, the intricate entanglement of these position (40–1), and its continuities during post-Duvalier times.

resurface throughout the essays in the representations of various Haitian intellectuals and their taking a stance, their “dangerous creation.” Among this long line of Haitian intellectuals creating art from entangled in- and outsider positions is the radio journalist Jean Dominique, who after several periods of exile had been successfully operating the radio station Haiti-Inter in Port-au-Prince before being killed on his way to work in 2000. Danticat mentions the Haitian-American filmmaker Patricia Benoît, who left Duvalier’s Haiti as a child together with her parents and is now shooting a film about Haitian torture victims; furthermore, the photographer of one of the most prominent images of the 2010 earthquake, Daniel Morel;³⁶ the painter Jean-Michel Basquiat; the writers Jacques Roumain, Jacques Stephen Alexis, Dany Laferrière, and Marie Vieux-Chauvet.

If, on the one hand, “the nomad or immigrant ... must always ponder travel and movement” and if “in the intimate ... union between writers and readers a border can[t] really exist,”³⁷ the subjectivity that speaks is constantly looking to the island itself for references, to the family members that live there. Decisions to leave and to return are reviewed closely in the light of pressing questions. Exile becomes the overarching perspective on Haiti; borders become questionable and dynamic. The struggle over the notion of “my country,” a point from where to speak, resurfaces in various essays, paired with uncertainty (49sq) and the feeling of an underlying reproach of “Dyaspóra”³⁸—for not being present, for being distant, and therefore not witnessing the events in person. Here, older essays and fictional texts enter the debate, where the diasporic condition of the writer and intellectual is constantly explored, put into question, and legitimated; feelings of guilt and shame also surface.³⁹ Boisseron speaks of a “poetic of geographical discrepancy,”⁴⁰ a term that nevertheless seems a little excessive since it is Danticat’s project to overcome that gap.

Eventually, other Haitian authors living inside the country such as Yanick Lahens, Ketty Mars, or Lyonel Trouillot join in on Danticat’s reflections on how to write after the earthquake. Where Danticat introduces guilt, others question the position of the writer, the intellectual per se. When Yanick Lahens cautions that the writer creates from a multiple exile, she makes us well aware of the precarious relationship to the community the writer supposedly speaks to, or even, for: “l’exil de l’écriture dans une société encore orale, celui de la langue française et celui de la distance avec la culture populaire rurale et aujourd’hui urbaine.”⁴¹ In *Failles*, Lahens concludes, “Gardons-nous de nous prendre pour les justiciers que nous ne sommes pas.”⁴² Lahens translates this distance from a popular culture that is dominantly oral and creolophone

³⁶For the Haitian photographer Daniel Morel, the publicly staged execution of Numa and Drouin becomes the trigger for his project to document Haitian contemporary history. Living in exile, he became a photojournalist and after numerous photo reports on the subject of Haiti his photographs were among the first to document the extent of death and destruction after the earthquake in 2010.

³⁷Danticat, *Creating Dangerously*, 16.

³⁸Danticat coins her own concept of diaspora, using the creolized version of the term “dyaspóra,” intertwined with the notion of the tenth department, designation for the Haitian diaspora under Aristide. It points to different identity positions in Haiti, in the United States, and in other diasporic situations. Cf. Edwidge Danticat, “Haiti: a Bi-cultural experience,” in *Encuentros* (Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank/Cultural Center, 1995), vol. 12, 1–9. See also Clitandre, Edwidge Danticat, 20–3.

³⁹Ibid. 50.

⁴⁰Bénédicte Boisseron, *Creole Renegades: Rhetoric of Betrayal and Guilt in the Caribbean Diaspora* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2014), 117.

⁴¹Yannick Lahens, *Failles* (Paris: Sabine Wespieser, 2010), 130–1.

⁴²Ibid., 131.

into a situation of exile in writing. Here, Lahens refers to the borders between different social groups within the homeland. That is, the border between diaspora and homeland becomes only one between many—its distance relative. The divide lays elsewhere—between different social groups, the creolophone and the francophone communication, and literary production.⁴³ After the earthquake, Haitian authors writing on the island make the point that, whether one is writing within or outside it, one must in any case deal with the challenge of creating dangerously. The divide between writing from inside and writing from outside that has been defining Haitian literary production since Duvalier seems less abysmal and possible to overcome in the light of the post-earthquake situation.

A Transnational Haitian Literary Tradition and the Importance of Remembering

Within the essay collection, the diasporic author creates a constellation of Haitian texts that become meaningful for the writer's own location in literary history and her way to create new narratives of Haiti. This leads to formal decisions:

Inasmuch as our stories are the bastard children of everything that we have ever experienced and read, my desire to tell some of my stories in a collaged manner, to merge my own narratives with the oral and written narratives of others, begins with my reading of the two books I eagerly checked out from the Livres Haitiens section of the Brooklyn Public Library that day, books that could have been written only by literary orphans, to offer to other literary orphans.⁴⁴

The two Haitian texts that appear in the citation above and are at the origin of yet another narrative of beginning are Jacques Roumain's *Gouverneur de la rosée* (1946) and Jan J. Dominique's *Mémoire d'une amnésique*.⁴⁵ The urge to collage other voices into her texts is linked to the special value ascribed to the dialogue with Haitian female and male authors writing during different epochs of exile.⁴⁶ The genealogy of Haitian writers includes both male and female voices, although the strong presence of female authors who address the gendered condition of making oneself heard as an artist is a deliberate decision. This dialogue becomes a crucial moment of self-assurance in a relatively young postcolonial literature, the beginning of which is traced back to Boisrond Tonnerre in an essay on the "Bicentennial" of the Haitian Revolution. In Danticat's rendition of Haitian literary history, the "Haitian poet" who drafted Haiti's declaration of independence in 1804 is one of the first to discursively perform the rupture with colonial domination and culture, a condition Danticat refers to with the notion of "literary orphans."⁴⁷ This notion—adopted from Jan J. Dominique, daughter of the above-mentioned radio-journalist—addresses various historical fault lines as well as its gender dimension. These fissures led to repeated experiences of being deprived of a tradition and

⁴³Cf. Clitandre, *Edwidge Danticat*, 54.

⁴⁴Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 62.

⁴⁵Jan J. Dominique, *Mémoire d'une amnésique* (Montréal: CIDIHCA/Éditions du Remue-ménage, [1984] 2004).

⁴⁶Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 61–2.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 62.

the aim to create a literary tradition from scratch. The status of writing and literary creation is marked by the “nearly impossible”⁴⁸ task of performing the cut with a colonial, European tradition and at the same time finding a relation to anti-colonial European traditions. This practice has been addressed in the above section where the transnational, interconnecting character of Danticat’s essayistic text has been emphasized. The author searches for alternative, subaltern practices that relate to a strong presence of orality/orally transmitted experience and to the lack of written testimony, while she at the same time experiences the constant feeling of being outside a shared European literary tradition. The violent and oppressing circumstances during dictatorship only heighten this dilemma. Jan J. Dominique’s notion “literary orphans” explicitly speaks to the status of female authors in the Haitian tradition. It addresses issues of their visibility and lack of voice. Danticat’s response to this condition is to include multiple female voices that create and at the same time authorize her own voice. Giving credit to this gendered condition her collected female voices are also understood in their intersectional performance and reintegrated into the broader anti-colonial picture.

The essay “Daughters of Memory” reconstructs a lesser-known female line of tradition and the dialectics between remembering and forgetting that Jan J. Dominique addresses in *Mémoire d’une amnésique*.⁴⁹ Dominique’s autobiographical writing comes to terms with a childhood under the American occupation and Duvalier; in *Mémoire errante*,⁵⁰ the author copes by giving the report of the assassination of her father. Both texts deal with unbearable memories that often make the act of writing almost impossible. The paradoxical binding together of memory and amnesia in the first title speaks to this difficulty of confronting these memories: “Memories when not frozen in time are excruciating.”⁵¹ To unfreeze them is a painful task. If they cannot be articulated, how do they find a form? Danticat’s essay links this painful dimension of memory with Marie Vieux-Chauvet’s novel *Amour, colère, folie* (1968). Written during the dictatorship and published outside Haiti, this novel has not only become one of the most important literary confrontations with Haiti under Duvalier but also has a dramatic history of publication, where the notion of creating dangerously takes on an exemplary meaning. Forcing the author into exile in New York, the Gallimard French edition was removed from the market and existing copies were bought up by the family out of fear of retaliation for the family members remaining in Haiti. A few copies sold clandestinely and the novel did not circulate widely until a reedition in 2005.

The genealogy Danticat constructs here is one of authors (in majority female) creating dangerously; the desire to inscribe her own writing into this line is ambiguous, as she herself states: “Writing is nothing like dying in, for and possibly with, your country.”⁵² But the “immigrant artist[s] need ... to feel that he or she is creating dangerously”⁵³ is, nevertheless, presented as a driving force for Danticat’s own writing. Presumably closer to Sartre’s notion of commitment, the diaspora artist feels the obligation to take risks and to testify to what has not been testified to before (in the sense of Primo Levi). The essays assemble moments where the

⁴⁸Ibid., 104.

⁴⁹Dominique, *Mémoire d’une amnésique*.

⁵⁰Jan J. Dominique, *Mémoire errante* (Montréal: Les Éditions du remue-ménage, 2008).

⁵¹Jan J. Dominique in Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 65.

⁵²Ibid., 12.

⁵³Ibid., 19.

dead or those deprived of their voice confirm the necessity of bearing witness, of testifying, be it in the name of a stranger or a third party.

“I Am Not a Journalist”: The Writer’s Testimony as an Echo Chamber

From the theoretical discussions about testimonial texts and the role of the witness in relation to the Shoa, the genocides in Guatemala and Rwanda, as well as other violent and life-threatening events, we know that the act of bearing witness contains the paradox of experiencing such a life-threatening event, on the one hand, and surviving to tell, witness it, on the other. Those who experienced the event in its deadly consequences did not survive; they cannot testify. Those who did survive and can testify did not experience the deadly consequences. This situation brings to the forefront the problematic of speaking for somebody, that is, speaking in the name of those that cannot speak for themselves or cannot make themselves heard.⁵⁴ According to the Italian author and survivor of the Holocaust Primo Levi, those who survived can testify in the name of a third party. But bearing witness is an obligation that faces the difficulties of remembering and keeps present the implicit process of reconstruction inherent in the duty to remember. To Giorgio Agamben Levi’s testimonial of the Shoa permanently renders visible the impossibility of bearing witness; Agamben discusses the possibilities and limits of language to testify to the horrors of the concentration camps and takes into account questions of responsibility, of shame, and guilt.

Besides the fact that to Danticat a diasporic position at times had been laden with guilt,⁵⁵ especially in the aftermath of the earthquake,⁵⁶ her essays address the paradox of bearing witness in a number of ways and link it to her notion of memorial art. The question of representing those who do not have access to speech has been widely discussed in the framework of Gayatri Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?” It also surfaced in relation to established Haitian authors inside the country and writing after the earthquake in 2010 (see above). For the post-earthquake literature, both ethical questions and questions of representational logic arise. Who can represent the catastrophe and how, who can speak for whom, and which voices will be heard, published, and circulated? The crucial question of how to testify on what one has not seen as eye witness—implicit reproach during the days after the earthquake—matches the crux of the immigrant writer who constantly sees herself confronted with not being present, not narrating from a proximity, an immediate experience but from a distance from the community. Both, post-earthquake and diasporic condition demand to define the contradictory relationship between writer and community and the modes of representation the writer can and should turn to. Danticat’s above-cited poetic authority, Camus, is critical of the writer taking the position of the witness, but embraces the responsibility of speaking for somebody. Whereas Levi, as a survivor, saw bearing witness as his duty, Camus rejects the role of a witness for the artist,⁵⁷ who should deal with both suffering and beauty, leaving it to

⁵⁴See Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, *Homo Sacer III* (New York: Zone books, [1998] 2002).

⁵⁵“Shamefacedly, I’d bow my head and accept these judgments when they were expressed, feeling guilty about my own physical distance from a country I had left at the age of twelve during a dictatorship that had forced thousands to choose between exile and death” (Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 50).

⁵⁶See Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 157.

⁵⁷Cf. Camus, “Wager of our Generation,” 235–48.

the journalist to bear witness. In other words, an ambiguity of genre, the status of the literary within testimony is what is at stake here. The relation between fact and fiction, the status of the imaginary in the context of speaking about life-threatening violence and testifying to it is as well addressed. Bearing witness becomes not merely an act of personal witnessing but rather evolves through multilayered, polyphonic acts of testifying that crystallize in what Danticat calls echo chamber, her mode of creating memorial art, keeping memory alive.

The loss of words, the impossibility of writing (fiction or writing at all) after the earthquake that is articulated explicitly in the essay “Our Guernica”:

“Words often failed me. ... It was too soon to even try to write, I told myself. You were not there. You did not live it. You have no right even to speak—for you, for them, for anyone. So I did what I always do when my own words fail me. I read.

I read hundreds of first-person narratives, testimonials, blogs.”⁵⁸

In her own writing, newspaper articles for the Miami Herald and other news media, Danticat comes close to the situation of bearing witness, testifying to her own “deep and paralyzing sense of loss,” “adding ... to a chorus of bereavement.”⁵⁹ Journalism replaces fiction and poetry, as they have come to a halt. Assembling and replaying voices or eyewitness accounts⁶⁰ seems like the adequate mode of representation. Writers found other forms of writing—newspaper articles and blogs—when fiction and poetry were not an option: “no poetry in the ashes of Canal Street” are the words poet Suheir Hammad uttered after 9/11. Diasporic authors share this precarious situation with writers from inside the country such as Lyonel and Evelyn Trouillot. Danticat quotes Evelyn Trouillot from a *New York Times* article: “My brother, a novelist, is writing his articles; I am writing mine.”⁶¹

In the liminal space between journalism, fiction, testimony, and memorial art, in the hybrid genre of the essay, the author weaves together oral history, accounts of family members, and her own testimony, uniting them with statements of different writer colleagues. Two different sets of utterances come together as they largely constitute the author’s story: the many declarations of fellow intellectuals, artists, and writers inside and outside the confines of Haitian literature, heard or forgotten, and the subaltern voices of fellow Haitians without access to public discourse (for different reasons). To characterize her literary testimony, Danticat evokes the image of an echo chamber⁶² where many different voices of those surviving and the dead become interwoven (pleading to be heard). Throughout the whole compilation they emerge and constitute the author’s story “in a collaged manner”:⁶³ inserted stories, renarrated sections of conversations, extracts from newspapers, citations from blogs, letters, e-mails, all in the effort of gathering a multiplicity of voices—a polyphony, “a chorus of bereavement”⁶⁴ that is not, however, necessarily multiperspectival. By manifesting, exploring, and examining these material elements, Danticat also reveals a key concept behind her own writing. In more than

⁵⁸Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 159.

⁵⁹Ibid., 158.

⁶⁰Ibid., 159.

⁶¹Ibid., 160.

⁶²Ibid., 159.

⁶³Ibid., 62.

⁶⁴Ibid., 158.

one way, these elements authorize her position of enunciation and gain authority from their inclusion. The selecting, organizing, and framing mind, which is also speaking throughout the majority of the text, is that of the essayist.

Danticat's appropriation of the creole term *journalis*, which she introduces somewhat reluctantly as reference to the illiterate part of her family, who uses it to refer to her status as a writer,⁶⁵ underlines the urgency of the writer's task to testifying, witnessing, speaking out. It stands for a shift in meaning, addressing not only the social role of the journalist, but that of the artist, both of them precarious, as we have seen in the previous section.

The example of radio journalist Jean Dominique, widely known in Haiti during the years of Aristide, stands for the importance of orality and the public function of an organic intellectual in Haiti. Besides all political implications, this role implies a public figure who mediates the different public spaces in a society fractured by language into dramatically separate spaces (see, above, Lahens on the usage of Creole and French). Danticat values this role very much, even though, as we see in the citation above, it reduces her function to precisely this journalistic task of witnessing. In Haitian society, the *journalis* is met with great hope and respect. Thus, Danticat reinterprets this concept positively. Immediacy, "creating dangerously"—these ideals are put into sharp contrast with the actual media coverage of the earthquake, and this opposition functions as critique of the latter.

Throughout the essay collection, giving voice to the subaltern is linked to various testimonies of survival that evoke not only paradigmatic situations of witnessing—witnesses of torture and mutilation, experiences of gendered violence—but also represent acts of braveness. The fifth chapter, "I Speak Out," introduces us to the story of Alèrte Bélance—a market woman who survived the death squads after the 1991 military coup. The author tells Alèrte's story of nearly being executed⁶⁶ and of becoming a public deponent of testimony through fragments of Alèrte's own published account, interwoven with anecdotes and scenes from the making of Patricia Benoit's documentary *Courage and Pain* (1995) on Haitian torture survivors. Danticat's essay does not insinuate that we may hear Alèrte's voice without some kind of mediation. Danticat gives her readers an insight into the shooting of a documentary on Alèrte. We understand the dynamics, forms, and difficulties of testifying. Together with the essayist, we observe the interaction between witness and filmmaker (who takes the role of the interviewer and scriptor in the Latin American *testimonio* tradition), preparations, and filming of Alèrte's difficult task of testifying to the physical and psychological mutilation of her body and the attack on her life. This also includes her later life as a witness. We share the writer's observations and reflections and get a glimpse at an act of testifying (from a distance). The latter not only involves verbal expression but also images of Alèrte's mutilated body and a reading of fugacious moments. These gestures, facial expressions, and nonverbal reactions capture that what often escapes discourse. Alèrte's testimony is constituted by verbal as much as nonverbal, visual as much as discursive aspects, which are residues of other media and modes of expression. Her invitation to "hear my story"⁶⁷ at the end of the chapter leaves us with an observation: One cannot do justice to the *testimonio* without reflecting on its procedures.

⁶⁵Ibid., 28.

⁶⁶Ibid., 84.

⁶⁷Ibid., 85.

Danticat's work as supporter and editor of anthologies of testimonies—compilations of truly multiple perspectives—is only a logical consequence of her strong convictions on testimony. Together with other women writers of Haitian descent she edited the trilingual anthology of *testimonios* after the earthquake, *So spoke the earth/Ainsi parla la terre/Tè a pale* (2012), and contributed a foreword to the anthology of testimonies from earthquake-struck Port-au-Prince, *Lavil*.⁶⁸ This “communal testimony”⁶⁹ brings together testimonials from very different social groups, such as “street merchants, teachers, doctors, professors, activists,” translated from Creole into English and published for an Anglophone-reading public. Both, the notion of communal testimony as well as the Latin American *testimonio* tradition speak to the image of the echo chamber.

Memorial Art: The Potential of the Image for Addressing the Unspeakable⁷⁰

Images are omnipresent in Danticat's essays, a characteristic her text shares with many others written after the earthquake of 2010. Haunting images and scenes like the first photographs of the earthquake on Twitter, a graffito of a “beautiful brown chocolate angel” “floating over a pile of muddied corpses” that becomes Haiti's Guernica,⁷¹ the public execution of Numa and Drouin already referred to above; images of consolation and resurrection that take on symbolic meaning. Danticat envisions creation beyond the confines of literature as memorial art, through the visual in photography, film, sculpture, painting, or graffiti. The figure of the sculptor takes on a key role in Danticat's poetics of memorial art,⁷² as the sculptor in ancient Egypt was described as “one who keeps things alive.”⁷³ Danticat ponders the different meanings of “keeping alive”: keeping the memory of the lost and dead, of loss and the implicated violence. “Alive,” however, also implies “the art that could replace the dead bodies, may also have wanted to save lives.”⁷⁴

My hypothesis is that the devastating situation of speechlessness, especially concerning poetry, is met with the intent of finding images, beyond words, that fill the void. Images become the counterpoint to narration, or even its replacement. Images seem to testify more readily to the earthquake; they seem to have a greater potential to speak to a broader audience, supposedly overcoming barriers such as literacy and language fluency.⁷⁵

Danticat may have been reminded of the centrality of the image by Camus's reflections on literature, embedded in a broader understanding of art. Camus aimed at an art, a form of writing that thrives off its images, not off arguments of reason. A successful literary text is able to translate philosophy or an ideological message into an image that readers can relate to. In a

⁶⁸Edwidge Danticat, “Foreword,” in *Lavil: Life, Love, and Death in Port-au-Prince*, ed. Peter Orner and Evan Lyon (London: Verso, 2017).

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁰For this section, I am indebted to Christoph Singler and his reflections on visual imagery. See our coauthored article on literature and trauma in Haitian post-earthquake literature.

⁷¹Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 169.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 20.

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁵I cannot discuss here the underlying assumption that images are easier to read and provide a more universal language, an assumption that is problematic in its own.

slightly transformed citation, Camus's conception explicitly reverberates in Danticat's poetics, which adapts it to a gender-conscious form: "a [person's creative] work is nothing but this slow trek to rediscover, through the detours of art, those two or three great and simple images in whose presence his [or her] heart first opened."⁷⁶

As we already saw in one of the past sections, Danticat places images at the origin of creativity. The filmic sequence of the execution of Numa and Drouin demonstrates how images become the trigger for memories. In the penultimate chapter, "Acheiropoietos" (a term referring to the Christian tradition of an image not made by human hands), Danticat invokes the icons of her poetic landscape, at the core of her memorial art and aesthetics. She returns to the execution through the eyes of the young Daniel Morel, who witnessed their deaths and immediately decided to become a photojournalist. The propagandistic photographs of the dead bodies on display turned out to be at the origin of his creation myth: "I immediately wanted to be a photographer so that I could document Haitian history."⁷⁷ A conversation between photographer and essayist on the role of photography evokes common ideas on the photographic image. Referring to Susan Sontag⁷⁸ and Roland Barthes,⁷⁹ Danticat describes the peculiar characteristic of photography, the *memento mori* that freezes a living being into an image, representing a moment in time and reminding us simultaneously of the vulnerability, the mortality of that living being.⁸⁰ Morel's photos have witnessed over twenty-five years of Haitian history. They are images of violent and disturbing scenes,⁸¹ taken to incite people to react and act, assuming we believe the photographer. Mirroring his own creative myth, one would like to add. Asked about the relationship between photography and death, Morel takes a radical position, saying that "when you make people pose for a photograph, you kill them."⁸² Besides Morel's possible hint at the difference between posing and shooting a scene in motion, he accentuates the aspect of "capturing"⁸³ an image not offered up voluntarily. This hierarchical situation echoes Felix Morisseau-Leroy's well-known creole poem "Tourist," in which the speaker, a "poverty-stricken photography subject actually speaks" back and angrily addresses the tourist to not take his or her photograph out of "fear of being misread, mis-seen, and misunderstood."⁸⁴

The photographer enters into this relationship of power as the "capturer,"⁸⁵ the one deciding which image to show; but "on the flip side" of the photographic act manifested by Felix Morisseau-Leroy's poem, Danticat introduces an "other paradigm."⁸⁶ As a photojournalist, he also participates in documenting the photographed object, saving it from oblivion, resurrecting it. Another incident functions as a plea for photography to commemorate life. Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Patrick Farrell shot the black and white image of a dead girl's body in the arms of her father when, in 2008, he came to Haiti for the Miami Herald to report on

⁷⁶Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 18.

⁷⁷Morel in Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 139.

⁷⁸Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, 1977).

⁷⁹Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire* (Paris: Gallimard Seuil, 1980).

⁸⁰Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 139.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 140-1.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 145.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 146.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 145.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 146.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

the devastating effects of Hurricane Ike. Danticat shares with her readers the testimony of a father who implores the photojournalist to take a picture of the dead girl's body and to tell her story so that she will be remembered.⁸⁷ The photograph is welcome to keep the memory of the daughter alive; it becomes a piece of memorial art. Morel also affirms this other function of photography. It shows beauty and life in another of his series of photographs.⁸⁸ "Photography has something to do with resurrection," the essayist cites Roland Barthes in his *La chambre claire*,⁸⁹ and Barthes' original text continues, "More than other arts, photography offers an immediate presence to the world—a co-presence; but this presence is not only of a political order . . . , it is also of the metaphysical"⁹⁰ (*plus qu'un autre art, la Photographie pose une présence immédiate au monde—une co-présence, mais cette présence n'est pas seulement d'ordre politique . . . , elle est aussi d'ordre métaphysique*).⁹¹ This metaphysical presence Barthes even links to a religious presence, to the idea that the photographic image is not by the hand of man, in the religious tradition of *acheiropoietos*. Danticat's interest in this connection might originate from the function of healing, linked to the symbolic function of images in trauma therapy. Carlo Bonomi reminds us,

Une autre tâche des symboles est de mélanger renonciation et espoir. . . . Les symboles ont une fonction d'unification très importante: ils relient le corps au monde extérieur, les émotions aux représentations, le passé au futur, et beaucoup d'autres éléments. Quand une personne est frappée par un trauma, c'est précisément cette fonction d'unification qui est brisée.⁹²

Another task of symbols is to mix renunciation and hope. . . . Symbols have a very important function of unification: they connect the body to an external/exterior world, emotions to representations, past to future, and many other elements. When a person is affected by a trauma, it is precisely this function of unification that is shattered. (My translation)

These reflections on the function of symbols as having the power to unify what has been broken are at the base of Danticat's powerful image of post-earthquake Haiti. In this sense, visual images and photography, more than fiction, seem to bring a form of hope. These visual images, Edwidge Danticat's essays suggest, seem to overcome the limits of literary representation, and are thus linked to Danticat's aesthetic objective of her writing as an echo chamber that tries to capture more than one limited perspective and voice and is aware of the restrictions of the (written) text at the same time. This power ascribed to visual images culminates in the graffito of an angel that Danticat mentions almost at the end of the book's last essay-chapter: "a stunningly beautiful chocolate angel with her face turned up toward an indigo sky as she floats over a pile of muddied corpses."⁹³ This image at the entrance of a refugee camp in Léogâne, that Danticat's painter friend calls "Our Guernica"⁹⁴ (also the last essay's title), symbolizes disaster

⁸⁷Ibid., 146–7.

⁸⁸Ibid., 144.

⁸⁹Barthes, *La chambre claire*, 129, in Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 147.

⁹⁰Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988), 84.

⁹¹Barthes, *La chambre claire*, 131.

⁹²Carlo Bonomi, "Trauma et la fonction symbolique de la psyché," *Le Coq-héron* 174, no. 3 (2003): 55.

⁹³Danticat, *Create Dangerously*, 169.

⁹⁴Ibid., 170.

and resurrection at the same time.⁹⁵ Just as Pablo Picasso's painting representing the horrors of destruction during the Spanish Civil War became a *lieu de mémoire* in Pierre Nora's sense, Danticat and her companion in the streets of post-earthquake Léogâne come across a piece of popular art that—to them—serves as a symbol capable of unifying and embracing post-earthquake emotions.⁹⁶ Since the angel is quite a frequent figure in Haiti's popular imagery, we can appreciate its scope. Its presence is justified by its capacity to overcome the fissure left by the traumatizing event of an earthquake so short that narration proves inadequate for its representation.

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⁹⁵The Swiss-Haitian artist Pascale Monnin independently created a work of art published in the *New York Times* shortly after the earthquake that writer and publisher chose as book cover for *Create dangerously*. The black and white drawing shows the figure of a mourning woman, her arms spread wide, surrounded by floating skulls and fragments of writing: "Tremble," "ils sont la," "sont plus la," "la terre." The image of the woman, center of the drawing with the silhouette of a child to her side and the head of a corpse to her feet, has a star and numbers tattooed onto her left arm, reference to the experience first classified as genocide in the past century. Although not featuring the figure of an angel, the drawing seems to immediately relate to Danticat's image. The uplifted arms—representing mourning—might also be associated with the iconography of Christ's resurrection. According to the art director at Princeton University Press, Edwidge Danticat found Monnin's piece of art published in the series "Op-Art: Scenes from a Catastrophe" in the *New York Times*, shortly after the earthquake in 2010. The multiplication of meanings and allusions possible via this chain of visual analogies and associations positions Haiti in a global historical context of and links Danticat's text to other artistic media and expressions. It refers once again to analogy as a recurrent feature of Edwidge Danticat's essay collection *Create Dangerously*. Pascale Monnin, "Untitled, in Op-Art: Scenes from a Catastrophe," *New York Times*, January 24, 2010, http://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2010/01/24/opinion/20100124opartSS_2.html?src=tpt (accessed February 12, 2019).

⁹⁶The Christian iconography of passion as a subtext for both visual representations.

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