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Contagious Poetics: Rumour, Ritual and Resistance in Zora Neale Hurston's Tell My Horse

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Contents

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Abstract/Résumé

A strange and enigmatic collection of myths, lyrical storytelling and fantastic folklore, Zora Neale Hurston's Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica details Hurston's Caribbean travels and journey as initiate into Haitian Voudoun. My thesis engages Hurston's contact with Voudoun as a phenomenon of encounter which begins for her with the complex crossing of rumours, secrets, lies, myths and memories embodied in stories of spirit-possession, secret societies and zombies circulating in Haiti. As Hurston pursues the "truth" of these stories she is caught in an experience of possession which I call "the rumour of Voudoun." This rumour is contagious in that these stories pull her toward the scene of Voudoun ritual and permeate her consciousness. By retracing Hurston's own phenomenon of bodily possession back in and through Voudoun's historicity across the Middle Passage and as a "medium of conspiracy" among the slaves during the rebellious uprisings in colonial Saint Domingue, I will argue that the rumour of Voudoun is a contagious affect by which an insurgent communal consciousness is passed on. The rumour circulates in and through a non-national, affective community in Haiti which continues to survive amid the silent history of anticolonial nationalisms.

Dans Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica, collection mystérieuse et énigmatique de mythes, de contes fantastiques et de folklore, Zora Neale Hurston raconte ses voyages antillais et son cheminement à titre d'apprentie du voudoun haïtien. L'objet de cette thèse est de dépeindre la relation entre l'auteure et le voudoun comme une rencontre qui débute avec la prise de conscience du mélange de rumeurs, de secrets, de mensonges, de mythes et de souvenirs qui sont tissés dans les histoires d'esprits possédés, des sociétés secrètes et de zombies qui circulent en Haïti. Plus l'auteure sonde la « vérité » de ces histoires, plus elle se sens possédée par ce que j'appelle la « rumeur du voudoun ». La rumeur est contagieuse en ce sens que les histoires semblent l'attirer irrésistiblement vers les lieux du rituel voudoun et obnubiler son niveau de conscience. En analysant la « possession » de l'auteure, en retraçant l'histoire du voudoun jusqu'à ses origines africaines et en décrivant son usage comme « outil de concertation » des esclaves insurgés à l'époque de la colonie de Saint-Domingue, je vais tenter de démontrer que la rumeur du voudoun est un affect contagieux par lequel se transmet la conscience collective de l'insurrection. La rumeur continue de circuler dans le but de préserver une communauté affective, para-nationale en Haïti, communauté qui survit au sein d'un historique de nationalisme anticolonial passé sous silence.

Prologue

> *I became obsessed by the palpable edge of sound. The moment when language at last surrenders to what it's describing: the subtle differentials of light or temperature or sorrow.*
>
> —Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*

My pupils expand to meet darkness as I focus a captious gaze on the flashing figures of Maya Deren's black and white documentary film Divine Horsemen. It is mid-afternoon, the first day of university classes, so I am pensive, silently contemplating and negotiating from the narrow frame of the seminar room to the absurd dimensions of a twenty-four-inch television screen. I soon forget the hard, stiff chair beneath me as I melt into a scene of wonder and wince as a fine steel blade slashes the throat of a white chicken; taste beads of colour run from grey, sun-dappled skin; and now drift among gyrating bodies dripping their death-songs in frenetic ceremony.

Suddenly, amid the dancing and sacrifice a man rises and jerks, his body caught in a rhythm that sweeps through his limbs like sea tide across ship's hull, and he collapses in the spasmodic arms of a heaving mass. Even in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction this encounter with spirit possession grips me—casting an aura at once as visceral and ephemeral as the glistening residue of erotic coupling.

I am taken.

Still, I look for the thin wires manipulating these flailing bodies; the stringy hands of demagogues staging the scene. I imagine shadow-show tricksters share a winking nod of complicity just out of reach of camera lens or anthropological spy-glass—the anxious probing of Western minds. Weeks later I turn to Hurston's Tell My Horse, a book of voodoo and life in Haiti and Jamaica, hoping she will lead me back to this place of possession, to embody a space into which perhaps only literature dare venture, even if warily.

I know the scene of possession as a contagious spectacle though the why remains unknown. And as I accompany Hurston, and we journey ever nearer this ritual space—she as initiate, I as feasting interlocutor—we are held captive by the rumbling Rada drums and we drink deep of thirsting gods quenched by generous libations of rum, parched corn and peanut. The drums roar again. My pulse quickens. We push forth together, closer now. But as these pages turn and turn Hurston does not lead me to experience possession. Having waded so boldly into

the scene of voodoo ritual, I sense Hurston's body is no longer beside mine. In a moment of palpable absence I feel her fading from the narrative, abandoning me to sorrow. Though seperated by decades and continents from Hurston, our sudden divergence in this encounter is jarring. And when she disappears, I feel her absence travel from the pit of my stomach into a gulf of irreconcilable longing and interminable loss. Of what use, I lament, is my guileless work of interpretation, if this initiation into possession, if my generous spirit-guide in Hurston leaves me stranded with only a disappearing body of evidence?

So I wonder where these bodies go, these spirit-possessed figures holding court at the liminal space; this splay of sensual bodies—to which I must now add Hurston's—at the vanishing point. As I press the pulse of black text against the pallid skin of interpretation, I share a silence that summons the vestige of trauma, that recalls the solemn terrors of slavery.

Hurston's departure I venture, not unlike the event of trauma, may signal a breakage of the world engendered by the genocidal deprivations of slavery. For in their own genocide, many Holocaust survivors cannot face or possess the traumatic event and so repress their memories. They, in a sense, dissociate or take departure from the moment of encounter, but their affective experiences are often passed on in the form of literary testimony—through recurring nightmares, dreams and haunting visions. Where language falls silent in trauma, survivors seek to access this missed reality by discoveringm in its mournful silence, what the language had to pass through. Holocaust survivor and poet Paul Célan calls this experience a passage through darkness, an answerlessness, a frightful falling mute.

But beneath the answerlessness of Hurston's text I hear a faint whisper.
I follow it like a delicious rumour toward a scene of seduction. I listen harder. Perhaps these wounds of the ravaged, violated and dispossessed never heal. Maybe the worst wounds, as Jamaican poet Lorna Goodison would have it, heal into poems. Could it be that Hurston bears witness to a literary testimony in the fantastic stories and performance of voodoo ritual, which is passed on through the Middle Passage? Might voodoo thus carry an unconscious modality of survival and also embody a trauma so powerful it contagions all those who come into contact with it? An infection so pervasive, it summons bodies, including Hurston's, to the dance? And in this elusive dance of voodoo's sentient body language, might one discover, not merely the lingering disease of colonial incursion, but rather a cure that is spreading?

Dropping my tools of point and precision, I reach instead for uncertainty, the fathomless, the absolute randomness of poetics. A hurricane of questions assault me. Does Haitian voodoo perform a ritual mourning already embedded in the Caribbean meta-archipelago, where peoples of the sea harbour traumatic memory carried from the souls of slave-ships—the marrow of mourning unfurling like fishing nets cast out for corpses. And the terrors of colonial contact mingle in the murmur of voodoo's secrets, myths and rumours? How has this dynamic poetic of voodoo so infected the history of Haitian rebellion and resistance? The burden of proof weighs on me like carnage to Haitian memory. Like the fetid discourses of Western analysis. And if traumatic silence speaks in impalpable form, what if no-body knows if the truth is out there?[1]

♦ ℘ ℘ ♦ ℘ ℘ ♦

My experience of Hurston's disappearing body in Tell My Horse occured, in retrospect, as a gradual process in my reading but was first experienced as a sudden flash of insight.[2] The book begins amid a fragmented and hazy mix of history and ritual practice as Hurston details the rumoured relationships between various Haitian leaders and their legacy of Voudoun worship. A later chapter on Voudoun is more definitive as she notes that "Voodoo is a religion of creation and life" (TH 113) although the source of this life is mysterious, even infinite. She attempts to describe the *loa* (or gods) and their "families" in Haiti but also cautions that no one knows the names of all the loa for they are prolific and subject to local variations. They are continually named and renamed among Voudoun's adherents. She dismisses such caprice among the peasantry, arguing that "[i]t is easy to see the unlettered meeting some unknown natural phenomenon and not knowing how to explain it, and a new local demigod is named" (TH 114). As a faithful anthropologist she thus proceeds to define the loa and describes their powers and forces and how they are worshipped. Yet soon, Hurston's text dissolves into an enigmatic but lyrical entanglement of fantasy and fiction, of history and mythic rememberance. She states that "everybody knows" that the island of La Gonave "is a whale that lingered so long in Haitian waters that he became an island" (TH 133). Readers are thus unable to delineate a linear trajectory, to separate historical events from phantasmic stories, or to identify the original sources or origins of any tales or accounts in the book. Hurston's readers are soon awash in rumours of political intrigue, stories of the cannibalistic rituals of secret societies, fearful accounts of zombification, and the hearsay of Hurston's secret informants who testify to secret

poisoning and the evil practices of *bocors* (practioners of magic who are not necessarily initiates to Voudoun). As Hurston crisscrosses the Haitian countryside in pursuit of the rumours surrounding Haitian Voudoun, she whispers these tales into the ears of her eager readers.

Hurston thus builds a taste of anticipation in her text, leading readers down the blind paths that she herself follows as she chases these rumours, offering only a trace of expectation and no suggestion of palpable outcomes. For example, she observes that the fear of zombies among peasants in Haiti "is real and deep. It is more like a group of fears" but she never follows these fears to their foundations (TH 179). It is as if the journey to Voudoun is lifted from the page for readers on fluttering tongues of fear and desire. As I shadowed Hurston's steps in the book, I became ever more eager to follow her journey as initiate into Voudoun. When Hurston finally described her visit to Archahaie, the most famous site of Haitian Voudoun, I expected to be drawn by the text inside the experience of possession—not knowing then that I, like Hurston, was already summoned to the scene of Voudoun ritual by these thrilling stories, rumours and secrets. Not knowing then that I too was already possessed by them.

Archahaie in Haiti is home to the *hounfor* (or temple) of Dieu Donnez St. Leger, the celebrated *hougan* (Voudoun priest). Hurston's text seems to take a dramatic turn when she arrives in Archahaie and describes a terrifying experience during a ceremony called *Manger des morts* in honour of a houngan who had died. She depicts the scene of Voudoun as one might a theatre set, decorating the backdrop with flaming pine wood torches, sacrificial chickens and offerings of coarse corn meal. She stages the movements of Dieu Donnez and his march of assistants, conjuring the scene in a precise recitation of people and prop around the peristyle. As the act begins, there is the unexpected rising of the dead hougan with his staring eyes and head bowed. Hurston wonders how the spectacle is created, then she details a fantastic tale of possession:

From the crowd the *Mambo* (priestess) Etienne emerges in song which is then answered by the assembled masses. Hurston's writing now comes alive, flowing in rhythm to the Rada drums which, she writes, "began their rhythmic march from Guinea across the seas and three Rada drums answered them in exultation" (TH 144). Amid the chanting a noise emerges from the crowd which pervades the atmosphere and seems to grip the air with fear. Rumour has it that a man is possessed and he soon comes crashing and cavorting toward the peristyle. The crowd whispers that an evil spirit has materialized and Hurston affirms their response noting "the face of the man had lost itself in a horrible mask" (TH 144). At this point, one might say that the emotive becomes *material* for Hurston while her body recedes into the safer horizon of description. Unable to fully

comprehend the spectacle before her, Hurston engages her senses and summons sentient images from the wind, earth, and the rhythm of her very breath. It is as if Hurston's bodily form disappears, as if she escapes her own figure in order to meet the strange and frightening figure before her. In describing the possessed man's sudden emergence and his impact on the crowd, she writes:

> It was unbelievable in its frightfulness. But that was not all. A feeling had entered the place. It was a feeling of unspeakable evil. A menace that could not be recognized by ordinary human fears, and the remarkable thing was that everybody seemed to feel it simultaneously and recoiled from the bearer of it like a wheat field before a wind. (TH 144)

Beginning from what seems like an individual or "outside" perspective of the observer, Hurston's description now becomes one of communal dissolution. Her evocative writing further engages the reader who can almost taste the humid fear on her tongue. Clearly caught up in the contagion, Hurston writes "[m]y heart flinched and my flesh drew up like the tripe" (144). Her writing here is the most visceral rendering of all her "secret" encounters in the Caribbean recounted in the text. Yet this encounter at the hounfor of Dieu Donnez is experienced by me, in reading about it, as an interminable loss, a frightful plummet into an abyss. In locating myself in the textual drama—one which also hastens my step to the scene of spirit-possession—it is as if the full-bodied participation between Hurston and me is suddenly eviscerated. I am not one with the crowd, or one with Hurston, but am instead overwhelmed by the cavernous silence that divides us. That is to say, if Hurston's bodily dissolution draws her nearer to the scene of possession or Voudoun, it is also a moment of departure from me as reader. The thrill of my journey with Hurston to Archahaie recedes into a feeling of an unshakeable fear summoned in me by Hurston's invasive absence. From the chalky outline of her bodily remains, I feel compelled to recover her fading body, and so give chase.

As suggested earlier, the experience of bodily dissociation or departure is closely associated with traumatic events. Hurston's disappearance from the text may thus engage an unwitting re-enactment of a past event, a phantasy elaboration of a past trauma. As I will suggest, her encounter with Voudoun may indeed re-enact the traumas of slavery as well as testify to a legacy of survival. When Hurston fades from the text—in a moment of insight which I, as reader, experience during events at Archahaie but which may have begun some time before—she may deliver an unconscious testimony to the traumas of slavery by passing on a knowledge that she cannot possess.[3] In psychoanalytic terms, I as interpreter/analyst bear witness to Hurston's act of *transference* in and through her text. Moreover, in re-staging the scene of encounter as literary critic, I engage a process of

literary *countertransference*, and review my experience of Hurston's projections and introjections as well as the feelings roused in me by her disappearing body.[4] While Hurston may deliver her testimony to trauma as an unconscious act, the phenomenon of encounter suggests that we both partake in the dialogic dance.

The problem of textual interpretation in Tell My Horse also suggests the complexities of countertransference in anthropological work. Countertransference has long been a contested process for anthropologists who often consider it *either* a methodological tool in analyzing a culture, *or* a projection of personal fantasy (Deren xv). Yet the movement between fantasy and projection, between interpretation and analysis, is precisely what is at stake in Hurston's phenomenon of encounter. The process of countertransference, as we will see, is overdetermined from the start. For this reason, the phenomenon of encounter must be explored here, not only in and through the relation between reader and text, but also between Hurston as anthropologist and her subject(s), as well as between Voudoun performer and spectator. Given the contingent, sedimented and contested ground of the act of testimony and of bearing witness, then, how might it be possible to offer *my* own testimony to Hurston's disapperance here?

If Voudoun embodies a trauma which may be unrepresentable and cannot be possessed, it is precisely the blindness and overdetermination of Voudoun that demands I return, again and again, to this site, this sacred event, this ephemeral moment of contact, this dynamic poetic, this phenomenon of encounter. Voudoun seems to function as rumours do, flying beyond the intentionality of speaking subjects, and denying the binding enclosure of Western metaphysics. To encounter the scene of Voudoun may well be to become enchanted by the sacred dance and melodious drumming and to submit, bodily, to the rapturous singing and mysterious tremblings of possession. But Voudoun, I suspect, is no mere textual or bodily inscription. This knowledge runs deeper, coursing through veins of river and blood, crossing nations, disciplines, and the erotics of flesh. Indeed, it is the seduction of rumour to trace an unfathomable chasm between the empirically verifiable and the phantasmic. Forever harbouring and searching, these endless chasms of Voudoun encompass, not merely the surface of the visible world in Haiti, but also an endless series of refractions, inventions and sensual phenomena which draws bodies in and through the labyrinth of a long surviving consciousness.

In a flash of sensuous exposure I awoke to Voudoun, not as one might to the flesh of reality, but to the malleable texture of the dream.

Let me tell you my dream...

In the hum of every Caribbean night there are hastening silences. Each is woven of a discontinuous strand of secrets, lies, myths and rumours. Each holds a rippling memory and a promise. On the island of Haiti, an insurgent frontier of the Caribbean meta-archipelago, there is above all, above even the din of Nature, the rhythm of stories. These are sinewy tales of secret societies and toxic graveyard dirt, of zombification and spirit possession. These stories draw adherents into a drama of consciousness that may embody the cupidity of insurrection, hurry the ecstasy of love, awaken the trauma of enslavement, and stir the sentience of desire. These stories circulate and repeat as rumours do, forever summoning with the promise of restitution or resistance, forever tumbling away from an original moment of creation, or creator.

Before, well before one witnesses the scene of Haitian Voudoun, one experiences a ritual wisdom which was always already circulating—across the blood-soaked hulls of West African slave-ships; whispered in the rebellious uprisings of peasant insurgents; woven into the conspiracy plots of terrorists and lifted above the cries of tyrannical Presidents. For the scene of Voudoun is no mere praxis nor locus of hypnotic theatre. One possesses Voudoun not unlike one catches a breath, and in a gasp a life-world is carried in the rush of earth, wind, bone and spirit. One does not enter the scene of Voudoun ceremony but is instead summoned to the dance as a silent accomplice, trailing and tarrying in an inviolable hush, a cloak of being which traverses religious, political, economic and spiritual boundaries. For the scene of Voudoun

rises and shimmers
as you walk toward a precipice
an unseen figure shadows your step
you stop to risk a glimpse over the bluff's edge
but you fall and flail until
the sleep of death thunders
and you stir
to the thrum of a mock green angel
you open your mouth
to scream but your tongue flutters,
is a cascade streaming

ripe lemons, pomegranate and crisp coconut
but no sound escapes,
instead you release a pearl
that dissipates into knotted strings of light
a whirling wreath which hovers
over the smoke mouth of Voudoun
and you are consumed by a figure hidden there
he is all sapphires and rich plumes—prancing
but you grope darkness for a kiss of solid earth,
chanting the spell of sacred crossings, of ancient contacts
that bind you to the seething visage of Voudoun
it redoubles as God,
as Allah, as Moses
and the mask is cast in a granite stone likeness of
love
but who do you see when you look in the face of Voudoun?
Master? Father? Lover?
you turn to meet
her but she turns away howling,
the snake skin shed between your lips
as drums burst from your head
and your tun to the sound of
a way off whisper
put on flesh
and you breathe a world of sea swells,
mangrove swamps, and sacred grottoes
which smothers cries in the blazing harbours
a cradle the phantom ships invade
all hands declaring the sentence
contaminating the silence
"A nation is born to anchor the word."
but dancing embers sear the hulls of memory
and spirit songs tickle the ribs of slave-ships
and you mourn the hollow bone of Master
and pour yourself
from the cocked grip of predators

Notes

[1] Zora Neale Hurston, Tell My Horse (New York: Harper, 1990); hereafter referred to as TH.

[2] Most Western audiences are familiar with the term *Voodoo* as it designates a series of religious and ritual beliefs of African origins, practiced among Blacks in Haiti and elsewhere in the Caribbean. Yet Voodoo is by no means a clearly accepted or universal concept. Anthropologist Wade Davis states that the religion of Haitian people is not a uniform theology and, as such, anthropologists loosely employ *Vodoun* or *Vodoun religion* to embody a collection of varied rites that may be traced to diverse parts of Africa. The word *voodoo*, he suggests, is from the Fon language of Dahomey (now Benin) and Togo and means "god" or "spirit." However, in keeping with the elusive and varied practices by which adherents "serve the *loa*" (or deity), Voudoun not only defies a discrete set of practices but also lacks any centralization of place or power; the name would not be recognized in many regions of Haiti. Scholars such as Alfred Métraux and Michel Laguerre refer to the folk religion of voodoo but other anthropologists, in an effort to avoid the sensational images of sorcery and black magic appropriated in the West, have chosen to use the substitutes *vodu*, *vodun*, *voudoun*, and *vodoun*. See Wade Davis, Passage of Darkness: The Ethnobiology of the Haitian Zombie (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988) 273 & 291. *Vaudun*, also referred to as voodoo, is the name given to animastic cult or religious beliefs probably originating in Arada-Dahomey kingdoms of West Africa. In discussing the complicated and obscure panorama of beliefs that the African slaves introduced into the Caribbean, Antonio Benítez-Rojo suggests that these beliefs inform an entire body of sociocultural practices encompassing such domains as music, ancestor cults, medicinal botany, trance states, and cooking, so that "[r]eligion in Africa is not something that can be separated from knowledge, politics, economics, or the social and cultural spheres; it can't even be distinguished from history, since it is, in itself, history; we're dealing here with a discourse that permeates all human activity and interferes in all practices. In black Africa, religion is everything, and at the same time it is nothing, for it can't be isolated from the world of phenomena or even of Being." See Antonio Benítez-Rojo, The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective (Durham: Duke UP, 1996) 159. I have chosen to mobilize the term *Voudoun* in my thesis as a fluid signification which will move toward and also perform the overdeterminations and crossings noted by Benítez-Rojo.

[3] In positing Hurston's departure as in Voudoun's literary testimony, I engage the tools of psychoanalysis, a field which examines the complexities of the testimonial function, especially given the "crisis of witnessing" which Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman have named the period following the traumas of the Holocaust. They write that "[p]sychoanalysis . . . profoundly rethinks and radically renews the concept of the testimony, by submitting, and by recognizing for the first time in the history of culture, that one does not have to possess or own the truth, in order to effectively bear witness to it; that speech as such is unwittingly testimonial; and that the speaking subject constantly bears witness to a truth that nonetheless continues to escape him, a truth that is, essentially, not available to its own speaker." See Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History (New York: Routledge, 1992) 15.

[4] For a detailed description of the process of transference and countertransference as understood in some of the theoretical developments of psychoanalysis, see R.D. Hinshelwood, A Dictionary of Kleinian Thought (London: Free Association Books, 1989) 446-450 & 253-258.

Introduction

My thesis examines one of Zora Neale Hurston's most controversial, little-read and enigmatic books Tell My Horse: Voodoo and life in Haiti and Jamaica. In this text, Hurston, who was trained as an anthropologist at Barnard College under Franz Boas, records her extraordinary experiences in the Caribbean, and her journey as initiate into Haitian Voudoun. In a text which interweaves lyrical storytelling, historical account, mythic remembrance, ethnographic interpretation, and virulent polemic, Hurston engages the fantastic as well as the jingoistic. Upon its publication in 1938, the book received controversial reviews ranging from praise for "a harvest unbelievably rich" in folklore and social commentary, to strong rebukes for strikingly dramatic storytelling that bordered on "sensationalism."[1] Perhaps given the difficult crossing of its discursive and disciplinary modes this book has received limited attention by literary critics. Yet in its traversal of boundaries from America's South to the Slave Coast of West Africa, from the traumatic Middle Passage to the Caribbean Archipelago, her book offers an unusual and compelling, if fragmented, example of an African American engagement of the complexities of colonial contact and exchange within modernity. Starting with my contact with Haitian Voudoun through Maya Deren's documentary film Divine Horsemen, my thesis traces Tell My Horse as itself, the expression and record of a *phenomenon of encounter* in and through the conceptual and perceptual modality of *rumour*, the modality of possession through which Voudoun takes on much of its force.

Before arriving in Haiti, Hurston's knowledge of Voudoun, not unlike that of most ethnographers, folklorists and tourists before her, was permeated by a powerful circulation of secrets, lies, myths and memories embodied in stories of cannibalistic secret societies, zombies, and possession trances—indeed these rumour remain rife today. Already a well seasoned folklorist, she first came into contact with Voudoun during a visit to New Orleans and her experiences were recorded in Mules and Men, a collection of American folklore written in 1935. She found that the practice of Haitian Voudoun or "Hoodoo" was bound by secrecy but "is burning with a flame in America, with all the intensity of a suppressed religion. It has its thousands of secret adherents" (Hurston, Mules 183).

Once Hurston arrived in Haiti in the winter of 1936, as she tells it, these stories and silences proliferated in the form of lies, threats, whispers and secrets; it was the appeal of these hidden or mysterious apparent knowledges which led her to chase what I am calling the *rumour of Voudoun*. Caught in the web of desire and fear, Hurston secured the first known photograph of a zombie and tried to infiltrate Haiti's notorious secret societies in an attempt to *kill the rumour* by finding out "the truth." Her pursuit of this rumoured truth

soon took her on a journey to the *hounfor* (Voudoun temple) of Dieu Donnez St. Leger, a powerful *houngan* (Voudoun priest) who agreed to take her on as initiate.

In absorbing literary prose, Hurston draws her reader ever nearer the scene of Voudoun ritual during a ceremony held for a houngan who had died. Amid a scene of flaming pine torches, rhythmic chants and rumbling Rada drums, there is the lurch of a possessed man who cavorts and crashes toward the center of the peristyle. Hurston describes a "fear so humid you could smell it and feel it on your tongue," (144) a contagion of unspeakable evil which suddenly pervades the scene and terrifies the crowd. She writes: "My heart flinched and my flesh drew up like the tripe" (144). Yet in a moment of impalpable absence, her body disappears from the narrative, as if the simultaneous witnessing between interlocutor and narrator falls into an unspeakable abyss. It is this silence which most afflicts my reading of the text. While the reader is left to mourn an interminable loss, the rumour of Voudoun lingers. This moment of Hurston's dispossession and disembodiment marks a dramatic point of departure for me as for Hurston. Rather than coming to possess the secret of Voudoun, Hurston, it seems, comes to be possessed by it. As perhaps, now, am I.

As a consequence of this strange moment of Hurston's bodily disappearance, I want to suggest that the rumour Hurston chases, and which contagions her readers, operates in a manner similar to testimonies of trauma which are borne in moments of great historical violence. Making use of recent investigations of trauma and literary testimony—which find that the affects of those who testify to trauma are communicative and contagious, even though often marked by a temporal lag—I argue that Hurston becomes *caught in a rumour* that thrives among Voudoun's adherents and detractors alike. By both pursuing and unconsciously perpetuating the rumour, Hurston's experience of *possession* becomes a contagion which permeates her text. In thus contaminating the scene of reading (including my own), I will consider how this dynamic of rumour, or what one might call the *poetic of Voudoun*, serves to challenge the relationship between reader and text, self and other, performer and spectator. This challenge occurs not merely by dislodging already unstable subject positions, between Hurston and the possessed man at Archahaie for example, but by provoking an empathetic and affective relationship between reader and narrator, by summoning bodies to an *other* cosmological order. This is, I will argue, a contagious affect by which an insurgent Haitian peasant consciousness is *passed on* by Hurston but not *possessed*. Nor can it be possessed by her readers. Hurston's encounter thus marks the site of a radical transaction of alterities and carries the traces of a surviving consciousness in a contested but sacred space of rival ontologies and cosmologies.

Moreover, in passing on the rumour of both Voudoun and its peasant roots, she testifies to a passage through difference itself.

In order to demonstrate what is at stake in this passing on in which Hurston participates, my first chapter "**Family Secrets: Myth, Memory and Voudoun Ritual**" examines the shifting scene of Voudoun as one which problematizes, particularly among members of Haiti's peasant classes, an existential relationship to community. I will be arguing, on the basis of much historical and contemporary post-colonial work on Haiti, that rather than privileging property and possession by the autonomous, rational subject as the sacred right within the only legitimate and recognized community, the nation, the rumour of Voudoun preserves an inviolable interiority which is constitutive of a non-national, affective community. Voudoun's *community of the sacred* is one version of a site of collectivity which remains unspoken but which is already written in the silent history of anti-colonial nationalisms.[2] The lure of the sacred is the preservation of an inviolability against invasive regimes of discourse, displacement and the dispossessions of slavery. In this chapter I will attempt to re-trace the unspeakable history of Voudoun, from its rich sources in West Africa through the deprivations and survivals of the Middle Passage, then back in and through the French Revolution as a flashpoint of Western history and birthplace of the "imagined nation" of Haiti.[3] This history shows that the rumour of Voudoun was the crucial "medium of conspiracy" during the slave uprisings which released colonial Saint Domingue from French imperialist rule.[4]

I further examine the disavowal and appropriation of Voudoun across the legacy of Haitian leadership from Toussaint L'Ouverture, charismatic leader of the Haitian Revolution (1796-1804), to the infamous regime of François "Papa Doc" Duvalier (1907-71). Hurston's encounter, prior to Papa Doc's regime, does not signify a discrete moment in the tradition of military or historical mobilization—in which the rumour of Voudoun is repeated as an integral *epistemology of the hearsay*, a subversive strategy to secure a clandestine bodily escape—for Hurston's bodily disappearance hints that this experience remains unpossessed and unspeakable. The rumour does not then define a body totally imprinted by history, nor is it inscribed on a textual body, but rather points toward Voudoun's *modality of possession* as an experience of immediacy, an ongoing resistance circulating in and through a communal consciousness that runs underground.

In chapter two "**Strange Displacements: Contagion, Carrying on and Killing the Rumour,**" I argue that Voudoun' unspeakability is thus enacted where contemporary theories of discourse fall silent. There is, I will argue, something carried in language and which also exceeds and perhaps precedes language, that may well remain beyond the reach of language-centered Western theoretical tools. The stories, secrets,

myths and memory which constitute Voudoun's rumour also circulate in order to preserve a measure of inviolable interiority among adherents, while remaining unspeakable. As such, Hurston is drawn to the rumour of Voudoun and experiences a crisis of encounter which re-routes her sense of being. While she attempts to circle in on the rumour, to map its trajectories, she instead becomes implicated in the secrets and lies of Voudoun. It is this "habit of lying" which Hurston finds so prevalent in Haiti, that remains part of the rumour's modality of possession. The estrangement of Hurston's encounter with the rumour of Voudoun, then, leaves her disoriented. Her bodily departure will thus be considered as one of a series of displacements in the text so that, in order to preserve her sense of self, I will show how Hurston chases and attempts to the kill the rumour in an act of murder and desire. Yet even while she attempts to reorient her own sense of being and displacement through the violence of interpretation, Hurston's bodily departure suggests that she cannot silence the unspeakable rumour, but instead passes it on.

Her encounter in Haiti is invasive, then, in that the rumour seems to consume her consciousness. I will thus demonstrate how this circulation of rumour in and through what I call the sacred community of Voudoun, serves as an ongoing attempt to secure an inviolable communal peasant consciousness. For this reason, the rumour's affective contagion also serves to challenge the pathologization or disappearance of the terms of interiority in much of postmodern theory. Moreover, this attempt in and through the rumour to preserve an inviolable interiority may well suggest a surviving consciousness which is latent in the Haitian landscape; a gateway opening through the character of conquest; a passage through the traumas of slavery as part of the silent history of Caribbean consciousness. I argue then that the *phenomenon of encounter* I have myself encountered in Hurston's text, necessitates a rethinking of some of the disciplinary crossings of literature, ethnography, history, psychoanalysis and phenomenology—discourse analysis cannot be the end point or point of convergence of these fields.

In chapter 3 **"Chance Encounters: Dying, Testifying and the Fading Author,"** I engage an interdisciplinary crossing to challenge what is often taken to be a universal claim that modernity itself might be structured as a shock experience, a break in the homogenous structure of experience. While the relationship between individual and community is thought to be ruptured by trauma, I will suggest that the displacements and survivals of slavery are preserved among adherents who embody a self which is constitutive of Voudoun's community of the sacred. I will thus argue that Hurston's encounter with the rumour of Voudoun and bodily disappearance is not suggestive of violent dissolution but rather of *immediacy*. Her departure marks a paradoxical entry into a communal participation in perception. Hurston's bodily disappearance in and through the

rumour, that is, may well exemplify a formless summons—a passing on and dissolution into the elemental—an involution into the sacred community of Voudoun. Rather than an example of an experience of fragmentation, Hurston's fading body will be considered as part of an *embodied metamorphosis*; a movement through bodies most evident in the spectacle of spirt possession, enacted in and through Voudoun's dynamic poetic.

This crossing will necessarily initiate a shift from psychoanalytic models of trauma to a phenomenology of rumour. My own contact with the rumour, of course, is limited to a phenomenological reading of Hurston's text and, as such, I cannot offer my on-site displacement in any analysis of this phenomenon of encounter. It must further be acknowledged that in slipping from my own grasp, the rumour of Voudoun becomes the site of my own introjections, projections and fantasies. For these reasons, much of the work of this chapter and of this thesis in general is framed as a prolegomena to a doctoral dissertation, a project which would require anthropological fieldwork in Haiti and more extensive research into colonial movements of resistance in pre-independence Haiti. Moreover, given the crucial locus of the sentient body in spirit-possession, I can attempt only a cursory investigation of the phenomenology of rumour as modality of possession. These observations and insights are futher hampered by the narrow purview of Western philosophical and theoretical conceptions which are mobilized in this paper.[5]

Nevertheless, I pursue such a highly speculative investigation of the phenomenology of rumour with the support, for example, of recent work in ecological philosophy by David Abrams in The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World.[6] In this book, Abrams, who has lived among indigenous sorcerers on several continents, also studies the spoken stories of diverse indigenous oral cultures. He finds in these oral based cultures a profound affinity between language and the animate landscape, affinities evident in various myths, magical practices and discourses of contemporary indigenous tribes. Many of the stories Abrams relays suggest an embodied sense of "topophilia" in that they engage sensual phenomenal, a reciprocity between senses and the earth, to create a sensuous life-world which is passed on to the community as a form of wisdom and censure. I want to suggest that the experience of the sacred community of Voudoun may similarly preserve such a "spirit of place" in which adherents participate in perception by taking possession of time, by summoning the community to witness, and in this way, preserve a realm of inviolability or surviving consciousness among Voudoun's adherents.

Finally, in my conclusion **"Sleep Talking: Dreaming from the Body,"** I will situate Hurston's *phenomenon of encounter* within the wider purview of her work and life. If her elusive, deceptive and controversial ideas placed her on the margins of literary

history as one of the "talented tenth" of the Harlem Renaissance, this existence may well be embodied (or disembodied as the case may be) in Tell My Horse, her most perplexing book. Hurston's inimitable life and literary career remain elusive and shrouded in rumour. As such, what I term an "aesthetic of disappearance" is part and parcel of Hurston's biography and other works, not just an epiphenomenon of Tell My Horse. It is well known that Hurston lied about her age; she compiled and collected fantastic "lies" or folktales exchanged on the porch front of Eatonville, and recorded them in Mules and Men, but in so doing she also confused times and places and added her own fictional and ornamental contributions. Her contradictions and silences surrounding political representation for blacks further baffled even her most ardent supporters.[7] Throughout her life, then, she came to embody the lies she passed on.[8] Henry Louis Gates, Jr. states that Hurston "wrote" herself and attempted in her works to "rewrite the 'self' of 'the race' in its several private and public guises" (TH 296). That sense of self as African American, then, may have experienced a far greater rupture in and through her encounter in Haiti.

Despite such continuities, if Hurston passes on a surviving consciousness in Tell My Horse, her involution in the sacred community of Voudoun may not have survived the return crossing to America. I will thus open a preliminary inquiry into the ways in which a post-colonial *rumour of Voudoun* may be considered against the African American oral and literary tradition of *call and response*. This distinctly Black aesthetic, advanced as a sort of Black universalism among many African American critics, posits a relationship between performer and audience, and can be linked to the oral tradition of work songs and proverbs known as African survivals. These tradition were carried from West Africa and the Caribbean to America on the transatlantic slave trade. These relationships of call and response have been referred to as a "dialogue of democracy."

Yet by briefly situating Hurston against the oral traditions of Frederick Douglass, I will suggest that the black oral tradition is silenced in the quest to voice a nation which was, as James Wilson stated in 1793, "spoken into existence." The call to an awakening black consciousness may well be muffled in the reiterations of linguistic performativity and rhetoricity which refers to and institutes the nation-state of America's "logocracy."[9] As such, I will suggest that rather than repeating the *rumour of Voudoun* as ritual wisdom, which *passes on the word of freedom*, Voudoun's trajectory may well follow an altogether different and unrecognizable path in America. Neither the *call* nor the *response* may be commensurate with one another.

I propose that the traumatic legacy of slavery and survival transforms, in and through the unspeakability of Voudoun's rumour, to a new voice of freedom which emerges in Their Eyes Were Watching God. Hurston's encounter in Haiti thus releases her

creative capacities and marks a rupture in her experience as African American which enables her to search for a novel structure of address in Their Eyes. Written while in Haiti, a gloss of the novel suggests that this profound influence moves beyond the rhetoric of division, the elusiveness of indirect discourse, the lure of referentiality, or the refusal to conform to existing structures of address. Rather, not unlike the rumour of Voudoun, I argue that she summons readers to a bodily engagement. In so doing, Hurston writes herself into the African American call and response tradition but also disappears out of it.

Hurston calls into question the terms of freedom on the threshold of an encounter that defies absolute or totalizing claims between an inside/outside; refuses to locate an insurgent consciousness in rhetorical figures and tropes; turns away from the drama of self-possession. As creative writer, dramatist, folklorist and anthropologist, Hurston's profound influence on the pursuit of voice among contemporary writers such as Alice Walker not only suggests a crucial point of continuity but also a rupture in African American literary history. Hurston's contact with the rumour of Voudoun may thus perpetuate the traces of a surviving consciousness which makes this a vital project to pass on.

Notes

[1] Carl Carmer, rev. of Tell My Horse, Booklist Nov. 15 1938: 96; Harold Courlander, rev. of Tell My Horse, New Yorker Oct. 15 1938: 95.

[2] My work here follows Partha Chatterjee's compelling refutation of Benedict Anderson's influential work on the historical experience of nationalism in Western Europe, the Americas, and Russia (see n. 3). Chatterjee agrees that nations were not the determinate products of given sociological conditions such as language, race, or religion, but that Anderson's conception of nations being "imagined into existence" cannot be applied in modular form. This modular application of imagination amounts, in Chatterjee's estimation, to the colonization of imagination by reducing the postcolonial world to being "perpetual consumers of modernity." Chatterjee instead mobilizes a specific non-Western imagination, working in and back through readings of the fragmented resistances of various sites of *community* against the hegemonic project of nationalist modernity. These resistant modalities, he finds, are embedded and hidden in the divisions in modern social institutions and practices between the material or "outside" but seemingly transcendent domain of economy and the state, and the spiritual or "inner" domain which purports to carry the distinct marks of cultural identity. In allowing the historical silence of anticolonial nationalism to speak, he nudges the conception of nationalism beyond the fray of political movements and disrupts the liberal ideology of distinct public and private domains, to demonstrate that "anticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before its political battle with the imperial power." Partha Chatterjee, The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993) 4-5.

[3] Benedict Anderson defines the nation as an imagined political community which is inherently limited and sovereign. He thus employs an anthropological investment in the conception of kinship and family; a conception which he traces following the decline of the dynastic realms and the belief in the divinely-ordained. He investigates, among other factors, how communities came to be bounded along lines of horizontal comradeship and fraternity amid a history of prescribed remembering and forgetting of violent acts of resistance and insurrection. These acts, which have also brought profound changes in consciousness, also set limits upon such imaginings. See Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1983).

[4] Alfred Métraux, Voodoo in Haiti (New York: Shocken Books, 1972) 86; hereafter referred to as VH.

[5] My analysis in this paper would set the necessary groundwork for conducting future ethnographic and anthropological work in Haiti as a possible participant and perhaps initiate in the multisensorial perceptions of Voudoun ritual and spirit-possession. This work would coincide with similar research by Professor of Anthropology Paul Stoller whose study of the West African *Hauka*, performers who mimic Europeans of the colonial epoch through spirit-possession rituals, urges a return to a sensory anthropology including a "radically phenomenological" approach to fieldwork. Please see Paul Stoller, Embodying Colonial Memories: Spirit Possession, Power, and the Hauka in West Africa (New York: Routledge, 1995); hereafter referred to as EC.

[6] David Abram, The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World (New York: Pantheon, 1996) 88-89; hereafter referred to as SS.

[7] Writer and poet Wallace Thurman was one of Hurston's most harsh critics. His *roman à clef* of the Harlem Renaissance Infants of the Spring, published in 1932, included a scathing indictment of Hurston's so called pandering to the interests of her white patrons. Hurston devoted only one paragraph to the Harlem Renaissance in her autobiography Dust Tracks on the Road, published in 1942. Please see John Lowe, "Hurston, Humor, and the Harlem Renaissance," The Harlem Renaissance Re-examined ed. Victor A. Kramer (New York: AMS, 1987) 283-313.

[8] In his foreword to Mules and Men, Arnold Rampersad suggest that "not all the stories and anecdotes in the book originated in the course of her research. Some of them, picked up elsewhere, may have been substantially ornamented by Hurston, and perhaps she invented a few." Please see Arnold Rampersand,

foreword, Mules and Men, by Zora Neale Hurston (New York: Negro UP, 1969) xxiii. For a reading of the multiple shifts and reversals written into Mules and Men, in which Barbara Johnson argues "Hurston puts herself into a position to hear the tales only to the extent that she herself 'lies'" so that "[t]he strategy to obtain the material becomes indistinguishable from the material obtained," please see Barbara Johnson, "Thresholds of Difference: Structures of Address in Zora Neale Hurston," in World of Difference (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987) 180-181.

[9]See Christopher Looby, Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996) 26.

I

Family Secrets : Myth, Memory and Voudoun Ritual

> There shall be a Day and the day shall mother a Howl, and the Howl shall be remembered in Haiti forever and nations and borders shall hear it and stir.
> (TH 66)

> Every discourse among interlocutors is a struggle against outsiders, those who emit interference and equivocation, who have an interest in that the communication does not take place.
> —Alphonso Lingis, *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common*

"It was one of those secrets that everyone had gotten hold of" writes Hurston of the rumoured marriage of Celestina Simon, daughter of 1908 Haitian president and loa follower General François Antoine, to Simalo, the goat (TH 97). Reputed to have held Voudoun services in the national palace, the incredible story of Voudoun worship between the General and the charismatic Mambo priestess Celestina is captured by Hurston in a thrilling account which foregrounds the pervasive rumour of Voudoun circulating in and through the modalities of possession in Haiti. The mysteries and intrigue surrounding Haiti's legendary leaders merge in Hurston's account with the indelible murmurs of secret societies and cannibalistic sacrifice, of elusive zombies and sacred waterfalls. For possession does not suggest a locus of self-knowledge or of self-presence; it does not signify a threshold of experience or of contact. Rather, Hurston's text leads one to the insight that possession may be the embodiment of precisely what *one cannot get a hold of;* that is, in the space of binding dispossession that recites the ruptures and displacements of colonialism, in the ineffable drama of consciousness that remembers the traumas of slavery, the *rumour of Voudoun* is repeated as a surviving consciousness which is passed on in and through the Middle Passage. The rumour of Voudoun thus, it appears, proliferates where histories of Haitian consciousness fall silent.[1] Voudoun thus enacts an underground resistance among adherents in and through what we can only call the *unspeakable*. What this means will become more clear as we proceed.

Because the rumour of Voudoun is unspeakable, it will not be considered in this study as a discrete moment of subaltern insurgency—indeed the indeterminate nexus of space-time-being will continue to shift in and through Voudoun's community of the sacred. The rumour which circulates unabated throughout Tell My Horse both embodies and *passes on* aspects of a surviving communal consciousness which continues to thrive even in contemporary Haiti. Today, Voudoun survives among Haiti's peasant communities and

its adherents comprise some 50% to 90% of the Haitian population; this is a number which has altered over time in response to diverse economic, political and demographic changes (VH 5; 58). Voudoun's adherents are drawn chiefly from among the mass of Haitian illiterate which in 1995 comprised 80% of the total population.[2]

Beginning with the fact of the importation of West African slaves to colonial Saint Domingue, I will examine the rumour of Voudoun across the unspeakable history of Haitian slave revolt and peasant insurrection. I will show how the rumour of Voudoun, although not a continuous or unchanging phenomenon, attempts to preserve a *sacred* realm of inviolable interiority, even against the advances of the sovereign nation. The rumour of Voudoun, in summoning a communal consciousness, draws a contingent border around the signifying family of inclusion including the overdetermined social, political, economic, epistemological and ontological borders dividing nation/community, and self/other. These divisions are, of course, always phantasmic, each carrying the weight of historical force and erasure. In reconsidering the terms of political representation and recognition among adherents, I will thus examine how Voudoun's sacred community challenges official institutional structures of representation by denying the debilitating, homogenizing entrances into the symbolic order of orthodox Christianity, liberal humanism, or the advance of Western based nationalisms.

The rumour concerning President François Antoine which Hurston records, for example, sets the scene for the interminable struggles and silences which mark Voudoun's complex relation to Haitian nationalism. Hurston's story reveals the anger and violence with which upper class Haitians greeted the secret society affiliations and ritual sacrifices of the peasant, turned soldier, turned president François Antoine. The story further suggests how the rumour of Voudoun survives across diachronic changes in Haitian society despite ongoing attempts to suppress and contain the rumour by the urban and political elite. Nevertheless, in moving between the difficult domains of recognition and representation, I will consider the community of Voudoun as a constellation about which and through which one might imagine an insurgent consciousness. As such, the rumour of Voudoun will not embody the truth of a static subaltern subject staged against the event of nationalism. I will thus investigate a subaltern insurgence in and through Voudoun which diverges from the model of the subaltern subject which Gayatri Spivak has discussed, in order to enact a community of unspeakable resistance.[3]

If one cannot represent or circumscribe the complex epistemological or ontological borders of Voudoun—borders which also police the provisional domains of belonging—then what, precisely, is being passed on in the rumour of Voudoun? To whom is Voudoun addressed? And what are the terms of such an inheritance? How might such complex

crossings of space and time, of body and memory intersect with the syncretic organization of West African ritual practice, European Folklore, or Catholic iconography found in Voudoun? In short, how might Voudoun's adherents gain recognition in a community without common origins, or blood kinship? In a community still suffering the traumas of displacement? In a community which survived the paternal choke of Western nationalisms? In a community constituted by the epistemic violence in the codification of law and other forms of hegemonic production? Part of the work of this chapter will be to mobilize a conception of community of Voudoun which will shift, alter and even fold in on itself.

Voudoun's adherents do not escape the reality of violence or political instability through Voudoun, as if this community were a self-contained and immobile force. Rather in and through the rumour, I will argue that Voudoun may enact a "real" domain which, while one need not physically inhabit, nevertheless *always returns to the same place* (Lacan, Four 280).[4] This sacred space of potential inviolability I have termed the *sacred community of Voudoun.* In traversing West Africa to Haiti, the insurgent frontiers of this elusive community thus remain overdetermined but are still rich in promise and plenitude. Voudoun must thus be resignified as a changing but *secret inheritance*, an underground, non-narrativisable history which is passed on through the Middle Passage. Voudoun's communal consciousness thus remains an elusive but dynamic and motile force. One cannot thus throw off the cloak of Voudoun, that is, to confront the light of reason.

As we have seen with Hurston, the rumour's extraordinary address or bodily summons to the scene of Voudoun engenders a sort of dissolution into a communal consciousness. The rumour of Voudoun must thus be set against the violating restraints of European reason and modernization which sought to establish unprecedented boundaries around the self, along with the missionizing urge to establish bounded, inward turning self-possessed colonial subjects (Comaroff 76-77). Hurston is absorbed in the testimonial function of Voudoun; it even summons her bodily to the scene. She is thus both witness to trauma and a medium of testimony. Hers is an unspeakable encounter, a testimony which remains fluid and in flux, a crossing of bodies and language. I will show how such a crossing, however, begins long before Hurston arrives in Haiti and is carried amid the legacy of Voudoun and slave rebellion. Voudoun's poetic thus passes on a resistance to the invasive violations of slavery and colonialism. One must not ask whether aesthetics enter the realm of the political, but rather consider how Voudoun suggests the excesses and embededness of poetics and politics in Haiti. Hurston's encounter with Voudoun thus suggests that the terms of interiority have by no means been eviscerated among insurgent peasant populations in Haiti; rather, in order to strive toward an inviolable realm of interiority, the sacred community of Voudoun stages its disappearance.[5]

Mothering a Howl: An Unspeakable History of Haitian Voudoun, Politics and Rebellion

One may attempt to trace the origins of the secret of Voudoun in cartographic form by running an index finger along the coast of West Africa, following westward across the North Atlantic ocean just below the Tropic of Cancer and skipping through the Caribbean archipelago to settle on the island of Haiti. Yet this seduction of origins only suggests the lure of the secret of Voudoun. But if the aura of mystery surrounding Voudoun could be traced in a historical or geographical narrative one might possess the secret of Voudoun as effortlessly as the Spanish "discovered" an already inhabited island. To capture Voudoun would thus be to possess a ritual praxis or to visit a locus of place. Such attempted repossessions of Voudoun are however evident throughout its history. When the American Marines invaded Haiti in 1915, for example, they ridiculed the rituals, blood sacrifices and fears of zombies among the peasantry. Further, as we will explore in more detail later, the exploitation of Voudoun for political ends during the regime of President François Duvalier seemed to make Voudoun synonymous with terror and random brutality. This urge to efface difference or otherness remains an effort to contain the rumour of Voudoun and by extension, the collective liberation and renewed consciousness carried among Voudoun's adherents. In the hands of ruthless Haitian leaders or invasive foreigners, the rumour of Voudoun, at least in contemporary history, appears to be wrested from the imagination and consciousness of adherents. The rumour of Voudoun thus becomes the perfect counterpoint and co-conspirator in the creation, or delegitimization as the case may be, of Haiti as nation-state.[6]

To side step the journey in and through the rumour of Voudoun for a moment, it is important to note how the mystery of Voudoun, in crossing from West Africa and through the Middle Passage to Haiti, carries this elusive aura of otherness. Such displacements remain trapped in circulations of power that work in the service of re-capturing a national imagination. Michel Taussig offers a compelling reflection of this phenomenon of displacement which he experienced during his own encounter with the ruins of Machu Picchu, a fortified Inca town in Peru perched on a steep-sided ridge which the invading Spaniards never found. The secrets of its construction form part of an elaborate, ongoing circulation of excited speculation in newspapers and among scholars. All of these narratives are known to Taussig before his visit to Peru but in witnessing the ruins of Machu Picchu,

these discourses of "secret exposure" return to haunt his perceptions of the imagined nation. Taussig writes that

> this constant puzzling by the authoritative voices of society about *purported secrets* of monumental and large-scale Incan construction was itself a sort of ritual, an obsession, a way of defining a sense of mystery about the meaning of pre-European, Indian, past so as to control the life of the present. What makes this defining mystery powerful is that it is part of a virtually unconscious way of constituting an alleged essence or originary point in the *sacred time of the nation-state*, and with that a particularly enduring notion of America. (Nervous 38-39; emphasis added)

Taussig's encounter reveals that beyond the glare of monumental history, such mystery may serve to re-constitute existing and dominant regimes of power. With the foregoing caution in mind, I thus attempt to "locate" the rumour of Voudoun amid a history of disavowal, disappearance, dream-work and awakening silences. I am compelled, in other words, to address myself to a mode of inquiry which has heretofore been deemed of no "historical" value.

Even among Voudoun's most faithful researchers, rather than plumb Voudoun's complex social, cultural, aesthetic and ontological permeations and imbrications between West Africa and Haiti, an unwitting "conspiracy of silence" attempts to stifle the rumour. Voudoun is narrowly defined as the foremost ritual of resistance among displaced West African slaves. For example, ethnographer Wade Davis among others has found a persistence of African traits and parallels between the religious beliefs and practices found in Dahomey with those of Haitian Voudoun (Davis 30).[7] The threat of zombification in Haiti is traced by Davis to the secret societies of West Africa, linking the creation of zombies to rites and threats of punishment meted out by judicial bodies for those who deviate from social codes. Such social disciplinary practices continued to be carried but also transformed in the unique circumstances of colonial Saint Domingue, and later in an independent Haiti. An adequate analysis of these genealogies which are a matter of great contestation would be far beyond the scope of this paper. What is important here is the insistence that the pervasiveness of Voudoun's mystery or secrecy may not be found in a search for concealed origins or the location of discrete social bodies but in the ephemeral and elusive mode of transmission carried in communities across the diaspora.

For, just what was carried in those infamous crossings and who were Voudoun's faithful adherents in Saint Domingue is, not unexpectedly, both well documented and notoriously difficult, if not impossible, to establish. It is clear that most slaves who were sent to Saint Domingue came from the Gulf of Benin area of Africa, formerly known as the

Slave Coast, most commonly from Guinea and Dahomey in Nigeria. Among these slaves, according to Alfred Métraux, were probably priests, magicians, or servants of the Gods, trained in Africa, who passed on complicated rituals, dances and rhythms (VH 30). These slaves were culled from numerous and diverse tribes including the Aradas and Mayombe tribes. If each of the social groups practiced a religion having its own hereditary gods and beliefs implicated in diverse domestic social structures, one cannot imagine the epistemological integrity of Voudoun as carried to Saint Domingue. Perhaps this is why most sources suggest that Voudoun cannot be reduced to particular rituals, ceremonies or religious beliefs for these vary by "cult groups" (VH 6 & 19-20). Voudoun thus consists of an entire web of beliefs which Davis argues "is not an external structure in which he [the Voudoun adherent] is enclosed" (PD 55; cf. Benítez-Rojo 159).

For Western observers including Métraux and Hurston, and perhaps myself, the problem of defining Voudoun may default to an allure of "difference in distance" which Taussig has noted. That is, the unknown origins of Voudoun are relegated to an exotic mystery, a distant ideality of otherness. For example, Métraux argues that the distant legacy carried in Voudoun was disconcerting to white colonists in Saint Domingue; he writes that it was "the witchcraft of remote and mysterious Africa which troubled the sleep of the people in 'the Big House'" (VH 15). Ye he also allows that the "Haitian peasant thinks of Guinea and Dahomey as mythical countries" (VH 28). The origins of Voudoun figures as both power and threat, mythical sources and ideal distanced space of a history. Métraux's analysis, although detailed, does not serve to place Voudoun or arrest the rumour which circulates around it and which it circulates. All we can see is that Voudoun slips out of bounds of a traditional analysis of origins.

Turning from such rumoured genealogies to Voudoun as religion does not help immediately to understand or delimit it as an object; rather, such an approach creates further problems and inconsistencies in tracing Voudoun's historicity. When the Negro Code was established in 1685, all slaves who came to the French Islands compelled owners to baptize their slaves. Officially then these slaves were Catholic (VH 33). Métraux calls Voudoun a syncretic religion of different African cults and certain beliefs from European folklore, but Davis argues that although Catholic saints and votive objects were adopted by Voudouists, these merely confirm the dynamic reach of Voudoun by transforming such iconic images into their similarities with African spirits (VH 5; PD 36). Métraux's analysis, it would seem according to Davis anyway, has begun too late. Catholicism is not on par with Dahomean and Congo cults, but taken up and transformed by them. The entrenchment of Voudoun in Haiti is thus not simply due to what Métraux calls "the great Haiti schism," which, thanks

to the Proclamation of Independence and the Concordat of 1860, broke Haiti and Rome. Thereafter, Haiti was outside the framework of the church (VH 50).

Catholicism maintains an uneasy coexistence with other social practices in Haiti however, and at times, becomes one of Voudoun's most virulent opponents. However, an attempt to ascertain the difference between Voudoun and Christianity begins to offer some insight into the slippery passages that seem to metamorphose Voudoun in and out of history. Voudoun adherents in Haiti today refer to their loa not only as *mystères*, *saints*, *les invisibles*, but also as *diables*. The language of Christian demonization taught to many peasants by Christian priests is thus internalized into Voudoun's performative force (although not strictly linguistic) and winds up reinforcing the presence of the gods in the adherents lives (Dayan 26). Joan Dayan notes the incisive remark of Drexel Woodson, an anthropologist doing fieldwork in northern Haiti. He states that "'If you ask someone what is your religion, they answer 'I'm Catholic, and I serve the gods.'" (qtd. in Dayan 26). Voudoun's capacity to absorb and invent out of the trappings, prayers, observances, and representations of Catholicism may offer some insight into Voudoun's ongoing survival in Haiti. Indeed, the confusion of religion and magic, of poetics and politics continue to be forged in surreptitious circulations of power in and through the rumour of Voudoun. These complex crossings also helped to obscure the "clandestine alliances" among the slaves of colonial Saint Domingue that so perplexed white plantation owners.

Beginning some 100 years before the French Revolution of 1789, bands of escaped slaves known as maroons posed a constant danger to the oppressive French colonial rule of Saint Domingue (BJ 20). Davis argues that maroons tended to be, by and large, newly arrived African slaves rather than Creoles. These maroons lived in fortified encampments in the hills and raised their own food and trained one another as guerrilla fighters (PD 217). By 1751 some 3,000 runaway slaves had fled to the hinterland; they formed separate bands and nominated their own chiefs (BJ 20). Mysterious killings, seditious plots, and rumours of danger became a staple of colonial life and the reputation of the maroons grew legendary among slaves who understood the risk of flight, which included rape, flogging or having one's hamstrings sliced if one was caught. The maroon societies mobilized a clandestine network of goods and knowledge that flowed between the maroons and slaves on the plantations. These plantations were periodically raided and acts of the poisoning of slave masters occured in nearly every house of the capital. Cattle was also poisoned and toxins were baked into bread and appeared in kegs of ale. Thousands of whites died in the spreading contagion orchestrated by maroons who were plotting their terms of freedom. Against this background, the rumour of Voudoun flourished. The mere rumour of poison inspired such rage and fear among colonial masters that a royal declaration was published

prohibiting the use of toxic preparations and later, of folk remedies (PD 222-223). Known collaborators met horrible deaths when caught; the trouble for the colonial master was that the enemy remained largely unseen. For it was secrecy that defined these communities; a strict allegiance to each other through handshakes, passwords and body brands.

One knew one's own not simply by speech or ritual affirmations, but in bodily signs of unspoken gestures. Ultimately, the force of rumour in the community of slaves and near-slaves would ignite a revolution. The threat of gatherings loomed so large, the French masters attempted to exterminate all rebels by forming specialized military forces. The French also began to forbid Blacks to gather at night and restricted their movements and interactions. Thus, a long-standing tradition began with the ordinance of 1704 which prohibited slaves from "'gathering at night under the pretext of holding collective dances'" (VH 32). Finally, by 1770 the maroon network had spread so wide that whites could not safely wander alone in the hills; toward the end of the century some 48,000 cases of slaves escaping to the hills or maroonage were reported (PD 218-219). But the contest against the colonial masters was far from won. Voudoun had its role to play as secret gatherings of Voudoun followers on the plantations extended the reach of anticolonial conspiracy, unifying the ideal of rebellion as well as the revolutionary slaves.

A complete chronicling of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) is obviously beyond the scope of this thesis; in the next section of this chapter, however, I will explore events following this momentous slave revolt in more detail. While some scholars consider the igniting spark of the Haitian rebellion to be the confusion of social and economic upheaval in France which precipitated the French Revolution, it is clear from the foregoing discussion that the seeds of anticolonial resistance had already been sown prior to the 18th century (Ott 20; Farmer 66). Antislavery movements in Europe had, of course, already begun and all slaves in England were freed by the resolution of the Somerset Case of 1772. Meanwhile, the ambition of white slave holders in Saint Domingue to retain power which remained unchallenged by the metropole, and thus to gain control of the new Colonial Assembly, led to the foundation of *Amis des Noirs*, a radical French abolitionists society. The membership of wealthy mulatto leaders in this Assembly, which included Mirabeau and Valady, was initially established to secure the gradual end of the slave trade, but perhaps more importantly, especially following the French Revolution, to secure equality for mulattoes.

The slaves declared an open revolt against colonial authorities in March of 1791, which was quickly put down and the mulatto leaders were tortured and executed (Ott 20-21; Farmer 67). Amid such parrying, the brutal treatment of the slaves was ignored but a source of continual fear for colonial authorities, a fear which turned to shock following the

remarkable slave insurrection on the night of August 1791. In August of 1791, hundreds of slaves were brought together under the leadership of Bookman Dutty, in a glade of Bois Caman near the Red River located in the north of the colony, to take the Oath of Bois Caman. The legendary ceremony, an event still passed on to the school children of Haiti, included a pig sacrifice and a blood oath led by Bookman Dutty; he thus sealed the secrets of liberation through sworn allegiance and under the threat of death (VH 42). Sorcerers and magicians composed the staff of Biassou and the ranks of slaves supported the leaders who drew their inspiration from the gods (PD 226). Armed with picks, machetes and torches, thousands of slaves razed over a thousand plantations of coffee, sugar and cotton (Farmer 68). The massacre of a thousand whites and a retaliation of 10,000 blacks ignited a war which would last 12 years (Farmer 68). The contagion which would further spread the spirit of revolt, however, had been stirring long before, in the mountains and deserts of Africa.

It is commonly held that the organization of maroon communities was drawn from secret societies of West Africa whom Davis describes as "the arbiters of culture" and justice (PD 220-222). Some scholars also argue that oath-taking may indeed have been a feature of all African wars of liberation; these included an oath of victory or death performed while imbibing rum laced with gun-powder, grave-dirt and blood drawn from the arm of each warrior (Saakana 19). These alliances were defined in terms of the community rather than of lineage or clan (PD 220). Above all it was secrecy that defined and protected the integrity of these communities—which seems to be why they could be hypothesized to provide a model for Saint Domingue's maroons to consolidate a heterogeneous group of slaves, boasting a diverse lineage. West Africa's secret societies ruled over personal and social crimes and developed a refined knowledge of toxic preparations or poisons—knowledges and practices which were critical to their ongoing power (PD 221). The use of these poisons were not restricted to the disciplining of members of secret societies, but they were also used to purge entire populations of evil. Davis argues, for example, that African kings who wished to rid their kingdom of poisoners were able to deport them with the aid of European treaty to Saint Domingue (PD 222).[8] Whether or not this genealogy suffices to explain the power, organization and persistence of maroon societies is less important than the facts to which it points. The practices of the maroons did not begin in Haiti, nor were they simply a reaction to European politics or institutions.

It is not surprising then, that the French expeditions which were sent to Saint Domingue to halt the slave revolt were hampered by the cloak of secrecy that continued to protect the rebels as it had the maroons. The practice of Voudoun within these communities became vital to the struggle for freedom; it aided in the circulations of fearful rumour. For

example, Davis tells of a female initiate of Voudoun captured during the uprising who suggested that a French leader would be killed if he tried to penetrate the secrets of Voudoun (PD 228). (These threats are strikingly similar to the experiences of Hurston who was similarly warned not to search out the locales of secret societies while in Haiti.) Voudoun thus clearly charged the revolt in Saint Domingue, infecting the maroon spirit in the raiding, ravaging of plantations, and plundering of French military supply trains that kept the insurrection alive. But was Voudoun then the *critical* rallying point in the impending struggle of the revolutionary slaves? Let us continue to look at the historical record and see.

By February 1793 the European war between Republican France and monarchical England, then an ally of Spain, helped turn the tide of revolution in Saint Domingue. While the enfranchised mulatto and white planters engaged in an ongoing power struggle, the maroons aligned themselves with the invading Spanish army who were moving overland from bordering Santo Domingo. The strained French authorities were forced to negotiate with the maroons, and, in the summer of 1793, the colonial administration officially abolished slavery. Privately, however, plans to restore the oppressive French rule were circulating. Rebel leaders Biassou and Jean François understood the terms of the abolitionist proclamation were designed to preserve the essential, lucrative economic order of the colony and thus rejected the offer. Toussaint de L'Ouverture, on the other hand, who had initially allied against the French with the Spanish, chose to salvage his ties with France. He thus shifted his allegiance, and, after overthrowing the rebel forces he had led, restored the prosperity of the colony under French rule. Under Toussaint, the slaves were free from brutality but compelled to work under the largely unchanged structure of the plantation system. Moreover, as a devout Roman Catholic and absolute ruler, L'Ouverture rejected the pagan beliefs of Voudoun (PD 229; Ott 128). We will see in the next section how this denigration of Voudoun by L'Ouverture may have hampered his success in preserving his rule of authority in Saint Domingue.

For now it is important to note that the maroon bands which ignited the slave rebellion in Saint Domingue are also considered to be in direct lineage with the bands of secret societies in Haiti that remained (and which remain) a pervasive force following independence in 1804. The very existence and practices of these secret sects in Haiti, however, remain a source of controversy (PD 232+; VH 293). Their indomitable legacy not only fuels the rumour's contagion, carrying the fervour of resistance among Voudoun's adherents, but also heightens the rhetoric of conspiracy which still circulates among ethnographers and anthropologists. Wade Davis reports that those societies still operating include the *vinbindigue*, the *bizango*, the *cochon rouge* and the *cochon gris*, who gather in

nocturnal ceremonies are membership is secured by "passport" or secret password (PD 233). They have been called criminals, bands of sorcerers and cannibals that strike terror into the soul of peasants by Davis. Hurston herself writes a compelling account of her strange encounters with the cochons gris, including a fantastic account of a nocturnal meeting. Wade Davis, however, traces the historiography detailing the role and function of secret societies and finds strikingly divergent opinions. Ethnographers R.B. Hall, writing in 1929, encountered a secret society on the remote island of La Gonave which he found to dominate the social and economic life of the peasants. Hall's early forerunners, by contrast, document secret societies as peripheral to mainstream village life (PD 232). Similarly, while earlier societies were reputed to meet in the open country raising fear among peasants, Harold Courlander suggested in a 1960 study that they may have been supplanted by the *société*, which operates as a mutual aid association with both economic and recreational functions (PD 233). Despite the so called fears of secret socieities, it is this ongoing and unflappable mobilization of fear and desire which lends force to the rumour of Voudoun—and which remains beyond the reach of ethnographers and anthropologists. The unknown origins and mysteries surrounding secret societies thus keeps the rumour of Voudoun, and thereby the spirit of insurrection, alive in Haiti. It is through this elusive circulation that one can begin to see a domain of inviolability forming in and through the rumour of Voudoun.

In 1980 ethnographer Michel Laguerre affirmed that secret societies were no doubt descended from West Africa's sorcerer societies, where direct homage is paid to Africa's maroon leaders. After Haitian independence, he suggests, the function of secret societies in Haiti was to protect community interests from "outside threats." Laguerre's work was undertaken to verify the existence of passports and secret rituals, but he also uncovered a specialized body of spirits, songs and dances. Yet through all of these investigations into secret socieities, it is important to note, as Davis does, that with the exception of Hall "[a]ll the ethnographic reports were *based on hearsay*, or at best on the testimony of former members" (PD 240; emphasis added). Indeed, until Davis, none of the reports regarding secret societies had been based on firsthand experience. These studies read instead as earnest attempts to fuel or extinguish the accumulation and growth of a rhetoric of conspiracy, rather than to investigate the complex modalities of the rumour which seem to characterize the secret socieities developments of power. Accordingly then, most investigations of secret socieities repeat rumours about them, not to analyze these rumours but to interrupt, imitate or siphon their flow back into discursive and even imperialist circulations of power.

In his chapter on Bizango Secret Societies, however, Davis bases his analysis on "participant observation" of some of the activities of the societies, though he states that some of his work must remain in confidential in order to protect his informants. Davis describes these societies as constituting a power or institution operating in tandem with the Voudoun temples. He defines them "'as the very conscience of the peasantry, a quasi-political arm of the Vodoun society that is charged, above all, with the protection of the community" (PD 237).[9] The analysis of community in all of these studies, however, is marked by a hazy demarcation. Davis explains that access to land is the domain of a Voudoun-mediated land transfer between local community members as part of ritual obligations. Contemporary secret societies, for their part, maintain a judicial force which preserves land holdings from the potential threat of outsiders, thus maintaining the power boundaries of the village (PD 238).[10] Davis surmises: "As religious obligations protect the community from *within*, so the secret society is hypothesized to guarantee the integrity of the total community from *external* threats" (Davis 238; emphasis added). It is unclear however just who constitutes the inside of these communities and who are the potential and threatening outsiders. In short, this simple inside/outside division is, of course, too neatly drawn.

In the foregoing review of ethnographic and anthropological investigations, the community is an *a priori* construction; a conception over which one must stumble in order to chase the rumour of Voudoun. I suggest instead that the *sacred community of Voudoun* is not associated with a particular kinship or group, nor does it designate an inner sanctum which remains absolutely free from outside threats. Rather, Voudoun's community of the sacred suggests a communal consciousness among Voudoun's adherents which circulates in and through the rumour, in an ongoing attempt to achieve a domain of inviolability from unending waves of violence and dehumanization in colonial Saint Domingue and Haiti. In so doing, the rumour carries the spirit of insurrection and survival to Voudoun's adherents. The inside/outside division of community, as suggested by Davis and others is thus overdetermined from the start. Far from determining the "truth" of Voudoun, these researchers wind the rumours more tightly, plunging Voudoun's secret into darker recesses. The rumour of Voudoun thus gains force in and through Haiti's secret societies—societies which are also connected to stories of zombification that similarly elude attempts at discovery by ethnographers. One cannot trace a genealogy of rumour to a self-contained and unchanging sacred community of Voudoun but rather gain insight into a dynamic and affective communal consciousness which survives, in and through the rumour, despite the violations and deprivations of slavery and colonialism.

One additional reason for this ongoing survival of the rumour of Voudoun in contemporary times may be that the administrative structure of the national government of Haiti, which according to Davis, does not reach directly into the lives of the vast majority of peasants. Davis observes that neither the institutions of the government, nor the military, recognize in any juridical sense the actual communities in which the vast majority of the rural peasants live and die. One must be cautious however that the terms of recognition implied in Davis' statement are modelled on that of citizenship within the nation-state. In a similar vein, Michel Laguerre suggests that if Haiti's network of secret societies could be linked, they would "represent a powerful underground government capable of competing head-on with the central regime in Port-au-Prince" (PD 237).[11] Certainly the force and function of the non-official status of the societies, their possible misrecognitions and misrepresentations in the domain of "official" or statist politics are crucial to understanding the political and disciplinary role of secret societies. For example, two of the most commonly cited secret societies in Haiti today are the Bizango and *Sans Poel* (or "those without skin"). When central authority erupts in despotism and constricts social movement, these secret societies emerge to confront the violent pressure of central powers with vivid displays of power (PD 248). However, such "public" displays have also been appropriated for dubious political ends. Prominent national politicians such as President François Duvalier (1907-1971) have cooperated with and even courted Bizango support.

A full exploration of how secret societies came to be embedded across the legacy of Haitian politics would require a more comprehensive scope of investigation than is possible here. A brief example of Duvalier's courtship of the Bizango should suggest the historical resonance and power of secret societies which are, as we have seen, constitutive of Voudoun. This examination will also suggest the discontinuities and potential vulnerabilities of Voudoun in the domain of Haitian politics. It is widely known that François Duvalier, graduate of the Haiti School of Medicine and former Director of the Bureau of Ethnology, attempted to infiltrate peasant society by courting the symbols and practices of Voudoun. Anthropologist Paul Stoller writes that Duvalier publicly wore the costume of Baron Samedi, the Voudoun spirit of death, "to frighten his people into submission" (qtd. in EC 189).[12] Dayan argues that Duvalier "mimed" the chief Haitian death god, not only by wearing his emblematic dark glasses and black bowler hat, but by sending thousands of his enemies to the grave (Dayan 27). His appropriation of Voudoun granted him legitimacy, inspired the fear of his enemies, and Duvalier in turn recognized the right of people to practice the "Vodoun religion." During the 1957 election, the first held under the rule of universal adult suffrage, Duvalier sought the endorsement of the houngan and Voudoun temples in certain parts of Haiti served as his local campaign

headquarters. Upon his election, he was unable to trust the army and thus created his own security force known as the *Tonton Macoute(s)* (Ton-ton "uncle" and Macoute "big stick") which included prominent houngan and a membership which by no coincidence deliberately overlapped with the Bizango society (PD 269-272). In part, Duvalier's turn to Voudoun was a reaction to the humiliation of American occupation; he thus advocated a return to African roots as part of a "new nationalism" (PD 269). Voudoun priests were invited to the National Palace and he appointed houngan to prominent posts in his government. While bringing many aspects of Voudoun symbolic practice into view, Duvalier provoked a dramatic resurgence of secret society activity, although the precise nature of such resurgence deserves further study (PD 289).

Given that the administrative structures of national government did not carry much force in the daily lives of Haitian peasants, Duvalier opted for an alternative, well entrenched network of social control. His nomination to the position of the *chef de section* —who serves as a mediating function between the traditional peasantry and metropolitan government—was often a Bizango president, prominent houngan or bokor, or both (PD 270-271). The overdetermined representation of Voudoun in this intricate power dynamic suggests that Duvalier may have indeed penetrated traditional Voudoun society. Within a year after coming to power he suspended all constitutional guarantees and established a reign of terror based on the Tontons Macoute, the notorious police and spy organization. As Dayan notes, Duvalier's exploitation of Voudoun has remained a tragic legacy in Haiti. She writes "[o]nce connected to accounts of blood-drinking in the palace and of cannibalizing enemies, Voudoun became less a place of survival (or 'maroonage') and more a signal for sorcery, terror and the gratuitous exploitations of the dread Tontons Macoutes" (Dayan 27). By 1964 Duvalier had engendered enough support and inspired enough fear among his enemies to declare himself President for life. The economy of Haiti however declined severely and 90% of the people remained illiterate. Duvalier lost support and aid from the U.S., was opposed by the Roman Catholic Church, and was internationally isolated. Nevertheless, "Papa Doc," as he was known, was canonized as a Voudoun spirit upon his death in 1971 (PD 271).

The degree to which the rumour can be expropriated or "mimed" by Duvalier strikes at Voudoun's potential vulnerability to symbolic appropriation but certainly not to its pervasive force in Haiti. This violent memory of Duvalier's regime remains a vivid and traumatic memory in Haitian history but it is more difficult to affirm that the relationship between the Bizango and the terrorist force of the Tonton Macoute in fact *violated* Voudoun's communal consciousness. It does perhaps suggest that no preserve of peasant consciousness can be continually renewed and repeated in and through the rumour without

remaining susceptible to some measure of violability. However, it is also possible that violent incursions feed into the rumour of Voudoun, such as with the traumatic violence of slavery. More research would be necessary to determine the relationship between secret sects and the Bizango, as well as to the discontinuities which remains hidden in and through the silence histories of secret societies in Haiti.

It is clear that Duvalier's exploitation of Voudoun was not a unique moment in the history of Voudoun. His courtship of Voudoun was preceded by at least one hundred years of struggle among prominent leaders in Haiti and Saint Domingue, in an effort to either stifle or proliferate the rumour of Voudoun. Toussaint L'Ouverture, as we have noted, as well as Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who hunted down the secret societies in which African superstitions were practiced (PD 230). Dessalines had been appointed inspector general of culture in the western departments which sought to eradicate all the secret societies in which African superstitions were practised. Once he assumed the title of emperor, Dessalines prohibited Voudoun services and killed its adherents (VH 49). Under the infamous Emperor Faustin Soulouque (1847-59), Voudoun, for a few years, become almost the established religion of the state (VH 50-51). Famous confessions extracted by Voudoun adherents during the presidency of Gefrard in 1863 included the sacrifice of a young girl, her body mutilated and devoured during a ceremony. These rumours and confessions however are of dubious "authenticity" as they may have been coaxed by police torture (VH 52-53). Stories of secret sacrifices during funereal rites, precautions against spells, and fears of enchanted presidential chairs, remain the stuff of folklore or rumour in Haiti. The State, however, was not the only institution so threatened by the contagion of Voudoun and secret societies that it struggled against them.

The first official attempt on the part of the Catholic Church to eradicate Voudoun dates back to 1896 (VH 338). More recently, one of the most violent organized campaigns against Voudoun was led by the Catholic Church in 1940, and is known among Haitians as *la renonce* . The Church had made virtually no impact in colonial Saint Domingue and in Haiti following the Concordat of 1860. Christianity was diffused but little practiced. Voudoun, paradoxically, had kept alive the memory of Catholicism alongside African rituals and practices (VH 33). Although still tolerated, many Catholic priests, whether Haitian or French, consider Voudoun to be the work of the devil (VH 336). In 1941, with the support of the government, a violent campaign designed to purge all faithful to Voudoun in an anti-superstition crusade launched to threaten eternal punishment for those who would not give up the cult (VH 340-341). The campaign was later supported by President Elie Lescot (1941-46) who ordered the army to co-operate with the Church in hunting down all objects related to the "Voodoo cults." His impetus for supporting the

Church's "antisuperstition" campaign, however, was to clear peasant land for use in United States rubber production (Dayan 14). While many peasants who were fearful of being deprived of the sacraments did convert, many also staged religious strikes. The elite class, who were indignant when asked by the Catholic church to swear an oath against Voudoun, eventually caused the government to withdraw support from the Church. Mass support eventually returned to the houngan and mambo, in part due to the government curbing of the anti-Voudoun campaign (VH 342).

Every wave of insurrection by Voudoun adherents, it would seem, exacted a calculated backlash which stretched the limits but did not extinguish Voudoun's legitimacy and reach. Duvalier's appropriation ignited a forceful retribution after the revolution of 7 February 1986 as slogans of "'Down with voodoo. Liberation of the Zombies!'" were chanted. The source of this ire were vigilante gangs of Protestant and Roman Catholic who ransacked Voudoun temples and killed an uncertain number of houngan (PD 288). Although it had the marks of another anti-superstition campaign, reminiscent of those which occured periodically between 1930 and 1957, the hounfor destroyed may have belonged to abusive members of the Tonton Macoute (PD 288). The rapid rise of Duvalier and the Tonton Macoute may indeed have contributed to the still unknown network of power relations and terrorist organizations that has yet to be unravelled in Haiti's political history. It is clear that Voudoun's reach remains entrenched, threatening both State and Church alike. The inclusion of the folk religion in the new national constitution, which was formally adopted by the plebiscite on 29 March 1987, is a strong indication of the pervasive force and power of the rumour of Voudoun (PD 286). Creole was recognized as an official language of the state and "it also acknowledged Voudoun as a legitimate religion and a vital part of the national patrimony" (PD 288). This gesture of inclusion and belonging may have been a revolutionary move to absorb the highly stratified peasant classes back into a legitimate recognition by the nation-state. But far from engaging Voudoun, this legitimacy may merely codifies an inheritance in the service of a nationalist hegemony. The unspeakable rumour of Voudoun, meanwhile, continues to circulate among adherents in the temples, in sacred waterfalls, in the villages, as it dances and stirs along the edge of a whisper.

Even in tandem with the political face of "official" power, Voudoun and thus secret societies defy conception; more precisely, Voudoun's "public face" continually turns away from circumscription or absorption by State power. For example, writing in 1991, Joan Dayan notes that that rumours of gratuitous and random acts of violence among Haiti's secret sects in the countryside are infected by the terrorism of Papa Doc Duvalier (Dayan 32). The periodic eruptions and displays of power by the societies; the whispered practice

of cannibalism among members; and the secret blood-letting seal of membership all contribute to the rumour of Voudoun which circulates to every region of Haiti. Secret societies should not be set in opposition to Voudoun's temple or the pantheon of gods but are constitutive of a complex communal consciousness. One might better describe the relationship between secret societies and Voudoun temples as each inhabiting both sides of a cosmic mirror in Haitian cosmology. Secret societies may not be set apart as an outside domain of violent insurrection situated against the sacred Voudoun temple, but rather serves to strike an ongoing allegiance to the dead and to the living.

Maya Deren notes that the mirror becomes an apt metaphor for the cosmography of Haitian myth but this is an embodiment that does not presuppose an entry into a symbolic order reminiscent of Lacan's Mirror stage. The loa are addressed as mirror images, invoked as Loco-Miroir (the mirror-loco). She explains the song for the loa Papa Legba (god of the crossroads) says: "'*O Creole, Sondé mirror, O Legba* (O Creole, fathom the mirror, O Legba)'" (Deren 34).[13] The houngan and loa turn and curtsey face to face in mirrored symmetry; the *loa* (also called *mystères*, *saint* and *les invisibles*) is also greeted and served in mirror terms. Deren further suggests there are ritual details in which inversion and reversal suggest a mirror held up to time (DH 34-35). The *houngan* (Voudoun priest) and *bocor* (practioner of evil or black magic) may also occupy the same man at the same time. Good and evil are not opposed but harnessed to the force of the rumour just as traumatic violence and surival are carried in the rumour. As such, in and through the rumour of Voudoun, space and time is never desanctified but remains a motile force—further extending the potential domain of inviolability in Voudoun's community of the sacred. As I will argue in chapter 3, the mirror's depth may also signal an entry into the crossroads of Voudoun, so that Hurston's bodily summons is her "secret passport" into the sacred community of Voudoun.

Secret societies do not then inhabit a mysterious binary in Voudoun but are arbitrators, creators and preservers of consciousness, which may well respond to diachronic changes in Haitian history, through the event of American occupation, and the endless complacency of bourgeois nationals. During the U.S. Marine occupation of Haiti (1915-1934), the secret societies surfaced as a part of the Kako resistance movement, which grew into guerilla warfare (PD 289). The disappearance and resurgence of secret societies in Haitian history remains shrouded in darkness. As such, those who inhabit the sacred community of Voudoun may well efface the bonds of state citizenship by, as it were, *slipping their skin*. One secret society president who was asked whether the Bizango reaches into all parts of Haiti thus responded: "The Bizango doesn't reach, it is already there. You see, we are like stars. We work at night but we touch everything" (PD 267).

Davis argues that the Bizango may well be a potent force in the Haitian countryside but they work within an "established body of ritual and folk tradition," not to disrupt order, but to enforce it (PD 284). The Bizango may not be a singular group or body organized to exact punitive or disciplinary action against transgressors but may signify the act of transgression itself. In rumour, Bizango is *a state of violence*. The gods are born and are resurrected in and through the rumour so that the violent memory and enactment of resistance is passed on.

The importance of preserving this memory of violence which survives in and through Voudoun is a legacy much feared among many Haitian leaders. One recent example may be found in Haiti's most successful international musical group Boukman Eksperyans. The group regularly struggles against government intimidation and censorship. For example, in the aftermath of the September 1991 army coup against President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the group found their 1992 Carnival music entry "Kalfou Danjere" (Dangerous Crossroads) banned. Kalfou Danjere is a song which explicitly sets the Bizango against Ginen (or Guinée), a general name for West Africa but also an imaginary historical homeland. Ginen also embodies a complex set of meanings including a spiritual realm where the Voudoun deities (or loa) live, as well as a general state of spiritual awareness of Voudoun practice. Some of the lyrics from the banned Carnival song state: "We're not going to be doing any killing / Ginen is not Bizango . . . If you're a thief / You're in deep trouble / At the crossroads / Crossroads of the congo people"—an African spiritual which suggests solidarity in inheritance. Ginen is thus counterpoised against Bizango, the Haitian society that dates back to the time of slavery which was reputed for exacting severe justice. The song may also protest against State violence as it comes to be embodied in the Bizango, probably since Duvalier. However, the opposition between Ginen and Bizango also operates as a constitutive threat which merges the spirit of inheritance with the violence by which that inheritance is wrought. In so doing, Kalfour Danjer advances a sort of veiled threat of violence against those who would arrest the imagination and freedom of Haitians—against those who would transgress the dangerous crossroads of Voudoun. One can thus detect the rumour of Voudoun in this song which simultaneously carries the spirit, memory and flesh of violence and insurrection.

The contingent borders which would at first seem to set secret societies in opposition to the Voudoun pantheon begin to further dissolve as the process of "zombification" wears away at the now well ravelled rumour of Voudoun. Haitian secret society members who tell of the existence or location of secret societies are said to be forced to imbibe toxic substances which are "provocatively similar to the reported means of applying the toxic zombie preparation" (PD 236). This link between secret societies and the

creation of zombies is by no means arbitrary. Davis argues that zombification may not have been a random act of revenge but served to police and protect the society (PD 239). Voudoun practioners are also reputed to have a knowledge of poisons which are extracted from plants that protect them against enemy invasions, further suggesting that zombies may be those who are injected with powerful narcotics which produce a semblance of death or apathetic, cataleptic trance (PD 68). But zombification has not been explained away by the investigations of ethnobotany. The legacy of poisoning also intersects with complex questions of consciousness. Threats of poisoning among secret societies is linked to the legacy of poisoning by the maroons so that the rumour's contagion spreads across the history of violence and insurrection in Haiti.

Hurston's own investigation of zombification included her visit and photographing of Felicia Felix-Mentor, a reputed Zombie in a case which drew international attention. Hurston was labelled "'very superstitious'" by Métraux and reviled by others for further stirring the mass hysteria which was already brewing among Haitian peasants (qtd. in PD 66).[14] Stories of zombification crisscross the Haitian landscape with tales of random spottings of zombies and rumours of graveyard body snatchings. These stories may be said to contagion the peasant population. This contagion does not only suggest a pervasive atmosphere of superstition but also suggests the complex metaphysical cosmology in Voudoun which finds no clear line distinguishing life from death. Davis details how the sacred forces converge and diverge in and through the spirit-body of Voudoun—for bodies do not strictly live or die among Voudoun's adherents. Rather, the zombie, like the rumour of Voudoun, hovers on the cusp of life/death, but also evades such metaphysical enclosures.

Davis divides the locus of components where Voudoun's sacred forces converge in the body. There is the *z'étoile*, or the body's destiny residing in the sky which passes on events to the next life of the soul. The *gros bon ange* is the life force shared by all beings which enters individuals at conception and keeps the body alive by giving it the power to act, but returns to God at clinical death to the join the primordial reservoir of energy that supports all life. The vital *ti bon ange* is that part of the soul which carries individual sentiments within each act—the aura and free-floating source of personality, affect, character and willpower. There is also the *n'âme*, which is the spirit of the flesh that enables each cell to function and which, upon death, passes into the organisms of the soil;. Finally there is the *corps cadavre* , the material flesh and blood body. According to Deren, the *ti bon ange* is the crucial life force which is displaced during the spirit possession when one is mounted by the loa, and which travels during sleep to experience dreams (DH 321, n.2). As it is the *ti bon ange* which experiences the life-world, it is crucial that this

accumulation of knowledge be preserved from sorcerers and thus passed on. Much of Voudoun ritual thus ensures the *ti bon ange* completes its cycle or metamorphosis and is salvaged upon death to preserve the wisdom of past lives (PD 186-187). Upon physical death, then, the *ti bon ange* is reclaimed by the living and given new form.[15]

Accounts of the Voudoun three or four-part spirit-body however remain contradictory. Joan Dayan states that the petit bon ange is inseperable from all that constitutes the adherent's personality or consciousness; and the loa, penetrating the petit bon ange during possession, depends on its force for support. Without the loa, the petit bon ange loses it anchor; the petit bon ange would thus be free-floating, attaching itself to anything; or, due to its dislocation, runs the risk of being stolen by a sorcerer and turned into a zombie (Dayan 31). She states that "[a]s Haitians starve and lose their loa, zombis roam the countryside with increasing frequency. This is a vicious cycle, for once the loa is not supported by the petit bon ange, and no longer possesses (or manifests itself to) its chosen identity—dancing in the head of its horse [the loa mounts the rider or servitor like a horse]—the loa is lost, and, dispossessed, it roams the countryside, bereft and rapacious" (Dayan 31). Rather than exposing bodies to these conditions, zombification is absorbed in the rumour of Voudoun, as a means to return and pass on such displaced bodies to a communal consciousness in and through the sacred community of Voudoun.

In general, according to Davis, there are two types of zombies in Haitian Voudoun: the zombie spirit (*ti bon ange*) and the zombie of the flesh, or *zombi corps cadavre* (which includes the remaining n'âme, the *gros bon ange* and the *z'étoile*). If a bocor captures the essential *ti bon ange* he retains it in a receptacle and it may be transmuted into insects, animals, or humans to accomplish the particular work of the bocor. The second zombie is one whose *ti-bon-ange* is captured, while the empty body is put to work as slave-labour by the bokor or a third party. In either case, one need not *produce* a body for "[n]o one questions the absence of resurrection" (PD 196). Tales of failed zombification by the bokor are integrated into the belief system as being the result of a natural call from God and thus beyond the sorcerer's control, or an improper dosage of toxin required to induce death is explained by the preventative intervention of the houngan. The distinction between so called natural and unnatural deaths may indeed avoid the appearance of failure for the bocor, but also enforces the sorcerer's powers as *invisible*, or beyond the need for empirical proof. Maya Deren notes that *Les Invisibles* (or gods) in Haiti describes a relationship relative to the senses; but the nature of *Les Invisibles*, the forces of spirits whose presence in matter constituted a state of life and whose permanent withdrawal constitutes a state of death, is known as *esprit* or spirit (DH 25). This shift does not occur among an absence/presence paradigm, however, but is always already latent in the

landscape. Spirits and death pass in and through the community, just as whispers and secrets pervade the countryside, and further permeate the spirit-bodies of adherents.

A person is zombified, not in an individual act of vengeance, but as a punishment or sacrifice (the *sacré*) of one who has transgressed, carried out to benefit a social group or secret society. Such slippage of bodies indicates that the fear of zombification is not the loss of a corporeal body, but the loss of one's soul or consciousness as involution or connection in and through the sacred community of Voudoun. In becoming a zombie, an alien force takes control of the body which does not harbour a complete soul. Deren thus suggests that the soulless zombie is stripped of its immortality, its powers of consciousness, and with this, its ancestral legacy to descendants, so that the zombie "is nothing more than a body deprived of its conscious powers of celebration; for the Haitian, there is no fate more terrible" (DH 43). Fate and destiny, fear and desire, are not charted on maps, nor confined to the events of a historical narrative, but circulate freely in the air, flesh and spirit; they circulate in and through the sacred community of Voudoun as a communal consciousness which refuses to expose bodies to the glaring, prescriptive, rational and individuating surveillance of nation-states.

As stated earlier, in passing on the rumour of Voudoun, zombies have even evaded the ethnobiological investigations that would reduce zombification to a realm of pharmacology, to a knowledge of toxins held by secret society sorcerers, be they *houngan* (Voudoun priest), or *bokor* (Voudoun priest who practices black magic). Such "secret knowledge" is not the missing link in the circulation of Voudoun's rumour which would lay its mechanisms open to exposure. That is to say, the epistemological status of zombification, of a secret that is held and circulates, is an intrinsic part of Voudoun's modality of possession wherein Voudoun gains ontological force. Caught in a web of intrigue, zombification becomes, not a case of awakening the dead or of achieving the semblance of death, but of refusing the division of life and death. Zombification thus slips away from the division of conscious and unconscious realms of Western life which is said to govern and police existence. As we have seen, the material/spiritual, living/dead distinctions of zombification seem to vanish in and through the rumour of Voudoun, a secret which lives on and is repeated as the drama of concealment.

Some light may be shed on the relationship between zombification and possession by other work on spirit possession. Anthropologist Paul Stoller and his work on the *Hauka*, performers from the Gold Coast who emerged in 1925 to provoke the French authorities in Niger through their "mimicry" and parody of military institutions in spirit-possession rituals. The Hauka were also featured in *Les maitres fous*, a documentary by Jean Roach of their yearly festival at a compound in Accra. Stoller's account of the Hauka

is an attempt to capture the multisensorial dimension of embodied memory, an attempt to discover "how one set of embodied practices molds historical contexts to constitute power-in-the-world" (EC 6). His work on the Hauka, who occupy the postcolony of Niger, inhabits a place which, Stoller argues following Achille Mbembe, is a "zombified space." Mbembe states that postcolonies bring "a convivial complacency that domesticates power relations and leads not to resistance, but to the 'zombification' of the *commandement* [French Regime] and their subjects'" (EC 141; original emphasis). They are a nation gone to sleep in the yawning complicity of often oppressive power relations and conditions. In the first regime of the postcolony Stoller argues that the "p]easants lived a life of austere insouciance" (EC 164). When they emerge from the terrors and iron-fisted rule of colonialism, the postcolonial subject, in Stoller's depiction, is still caught in the routine rituals of institutional power. The Hauka's performances enables the peasants to interrupt the scene and play amid the chaos and fragments, to create new identities. In mimicking judges, lawyers, doctors and other representatives of power, the Hauka attempt to awaken peasants from their "zombified reveries." A greater irony, however, should be evident here in Stoller's analysis: If as Benedict Anderson has argued, nations are imagined into existence through the trope of an *awakening from slumber*, how and when might certain nationals be conjured into sleep?

Stoller's analysis begins with a theory of nationalism that already engenders a kind of theoretical slumber. He argues that Nigerian military leader Lt. Colonel Seyni Kountche toppled the government of President Hamani Diori in 1974 by "manipulating Hauka aesthetics to consolidate power" (EC 168). This manipulation is likened to the Duvalier appropriation of Voudoun sorcery in Haiti. Stoller thus laments that the Hauka's "[p]lanned de-zombifcation . . . failed to transform Niger into a modern industrial state" (EC 165). Yet the Hauka operates, or are imagined to operate, in and through a space which anticipates the only predestined and legitimate community, the nation-state. The scene of resistance always already occurs on a pre-destined landscape. The space of resistance itself, the joyous playground of alterity which the Hauka might perform, must always fail if playing on national grounds. These are contingent foundations which, despite military dictatorships and tyrannical regimes, are also uneven from the start.

Even while trying to open onto the phenomenological dimensions of Hauka spirit-possession, Stoller remains trapped in oppressive circulations of discursive power. His account conforms the Hauka to a precise, static historical construct and determinism, though, as he explains, the Hauka claim an inheritance from the Songhay religion as an intermediary between the spirit-world and the social. These power circuits which they tapped into during the colonial, in this analysis, are foreclosed by Stoller's own reverie

over the imagined nation. Despite himself, Stoller carries the memory of colonial resistance among the Haiti into the phantom wall of symbolic practice. He argues that the Hauka ceremony "both confronts zombification and shields people from the seemingly incessant surveillance of oppression" (EC 165). If Hauka spirit-possession is intended to shield the hapless peasant from surveillance, than power is located in the bodies of performers who are similarly caught in Stoller's discursive circulations. The equivocation between surveillance and spirit-possession seems then to deferto the analysis and create a comforting material basis for the phenomenon of spirit-possession against the indolence of zombification.

One might be inclined to argue, as René Dépestre does, that zombies are merely a complex symbolic practice, a Haitian myth. Speaking in Marxist terms, he notes that "'*[t]he history of colonisation is the process of man's general zombification.* It is also the quest for a revitalising salt capable of restoring to man the use of his imagination and his culture" (qtd. in PD 75; original emphasis).[16] It is not the possibility of *restoration* that is significant here, for any project of resistance must have already plumbed the imagination, but rather the suppressed narrative of community which shadow these acts of imagination. To be sure, the freed slaves suffered from the legacies of colonial incursion but in defining this moment as a space of zombification, Dépestre freezes the possibility of an insurgent consciousness. Zombification in Haiti may well be an act in and through which adherents or "believers" refuse to relegate the memory of colonial power to the historical dustbin. In and through the rumour of Voudoun, whispers of zombification mobilize a sort of imaginative dream-work across the Haitian landscape, as a means to escape the oppressive surveillance of the French regime in Saint Domingue and other violations of peasantry in Haiti as nation-state.

As an embodied memory which is absorbed in the rumour of Voudoun, zombification engages a modality of possession which both eludes and engages the oppressive legacy of surveillance in the French colony—it does not wake peasants from their reverie, but rather fosters an imagination, a dream-space of communal consciousness which might mobilize an emancipatory spirit which was always stirring. To negate such complex crossings of the rumour of Voudoun would be to forego the rich resources of a pervasive and sustaining interiority passed on through this underground and elusive Haitian cosmology. One will not locate the rumour of Voudoun in a mythic homeland or relegate it to the static memory of violent contact. Rather, Voudoun's modality of possession is a dynamic and affective contagion which pervades and passes on a measure of inviolability through a communal consciousness which summons adherents to the sacred community of Voudoun.

Violating State Secrets: Of Hybrid Souls and Colonized Imagi-nations

As we have seen with the legacy of Duvalier, the memory of insurrection and communal consciousness in and through the rumour of Voudoun, is often eviscerated with the birth and re-birth of Haitian nationalism. As such, to talk of the rise of nation-states, of Haiti as the birthplace of either the first (or second) "modern republic," is to stumble through a haze of cultural amnesia.[17] It might be more accurate to say that the malignant plague of French colonial incursion is eradicated by the panacea of Haitian independence in 1804. One could say, the shattering noises of domination and resistance clamour high above the bellicose cries of the freed slave turned peasant population stirring, awakening, resisting, and finally exclaiming their inalienable right to a sovereign nation. This national historicity preserves Haiti's unbroken chain of being by shackling slavery to the importuning voice of progress and the emancipatory cry of democracy for the masses—as underwritten by waves of French, British and American capital and paternal protection to and mostly from the former French colony. The 1804 victory was sweet but hollow. Haiti's status as nation would not heal the wounds of colonialism, slavery and inequality. Nevertheless, it is into this seductive hollow that one must enter to discover, in the indomitable rumour of Voudoun, the violences which have forged and indeed ruptured the Haitian "nation" as "imagined community"; to consider how peasant communities awaken to Haitian citizenship only in the slumber of an oppressive redemptive remembering; to find in the universal emblem of "freedom" carried in nationalism, a debilitating surrender to rival communities, cosmologies or ontologies. For the same national imagination which stretches the memory of Haiti's blood kinship across the metropole to the hallowed graves of fallen patriots such as Toussaint L'Ouverture or Jean-Jacques Dessalines, also forgets the bloody, binding ties of colonial conquest. The modern nation thus comes into being wrapped in veneration of French Republican tradition and steeped in a misty promise to preserve individual free will against the rule of state and civil society. Along these overdetermined borders the legacy of revolt is silenced by the ongoing siege of rampant illiteracy in Haiti. Upon these bulging frontiers, multi-generations of racial heterogeneity fall back into historical line. All rights to property and political representation become official endowments of Haiti's Western-educated upper classes, while the peasants are left to receive, as one might forsaken alms, the splintered castings proffered from the elite.

Yet along this horizon's edge of history, the rumour of Voudoun invades the illusory borders that divide nation from community, self from other, public from private. While the reified economy of "elite" and "subaltern" politics, especially following Haitian independence, attempts to police such mythic borders, the rumour of Voudoun circulates

the replenishing and renewing life-breath of an insurgent peasant consciousness. Far from an apocalyptic address, however, Voudoun does not raise the dead in order to (re)produce the colonial or subaltern subject. Rather, in and through the rumour of Voudoun, the branded skin of the subaltern subject is again imbued with the indelible and palpable memory of survival. If nations are indeed imagined into existence then the sacred community of Voudoun preserves a deeply embedded existence among adherents which renders the survival of imagination as an indomitable and motile force in Haiti, even though this vital imagination is not always apparent to casual observers. Moreover, this is not an imagination which revels in past glory but one which challenges the determinate being of "sovereignty" in the contingent realm of the "sacred."

The sacred community of Voudoun is not a moment of counter-insurrection against colonial invasion but a surviving consciousness borne, not from the embers of Haitian Revolution, but fanned earlier, in a space beyond the reach of rule and national inception. This turn against the tide of nationalism thus necessitates an investigation of Partha Chatterjee's challenge to Benedict Anderson's positing of a modular conception of nationalism. Chatterjee argues against the modularity of Western based nationalism which are repeated in a colonial context, for anticolonial nationalism "creates its own domain of *sovereignty* within colonial society *well before* it begins its political battle with the imperial power" (Chatterjee 6; emphasis added). This excessive temporality, as we have seen in tracing the unspeakable history of Voudoun, is not an application of the revolutionary spirit in France. I will consider in the rumour of Voudoun which circulates and constitutes the sacred community, a modality of possession and resistance without determinate borders. For this reason, it will be necessary in this study to escape from a linear temporality that might find a suppressed notion of community in the interstices of state and civil society, which Chatterjee finds constitutive of liberal capitalist society (Chatterjee 231-235). I want thus to consider the sacred community of Voudoun as thriving under strikingly different terms of recognition.

When reduced to ritual practice, Voudoun indeed parries unsuccessfully in the spiritual dimension against the seemingly transcendent domain of the material which, as Chatterjee aptly notes, is the only arena recognized in theorizing the history of nationalism as a political movement. While the spiritual dimension remains crucial to combating this "outer" domain of the material, as we will see, the "inner" strata remains easily susceptible to appropriation and reinscription in a capitalist discursive economy. Yet as we have seen with the crossings of secret societies and zombification from West Africa and colonial Saint Domingue in and through the rumour of Voudoun, no such inner/outer domain can be ascribed to Voudoun. Likewise, the incursion of Catholicism among the slaves and later the

peasantry in Haiti is already absorbed by the rumour and recirculated. As such, Voudoun's sacred community does not speak of a crucial break in the history of anticolonial nationalism but *imagines a rupture* which was already there. This is not a leap into the open air of history, as Walter Benjamin suggests, but perhaps, as Franz Fanon calls for, an invocation to "introduce invention into existence" (Fanon 229). If one remains trapped within a circuit of imperialism in which nationalism feeds the pervasive reach of capitalism, the fragments of resistance must be located in a richer store of memories and an *open* promise. I will thus return to a *sacred community* of Voudoun which operates, not as a primordial act of love and kinship, but instead find dangerous acts of collectivity in and through which Voudoun's *community of the sacred* imagines existence as an endless and violent awakening. If the rule of the state remains impenetrable to rival cosmologies, or upholds the timeless rule of law or capital—the rumour of Voudoun violates state secrets by usurping this "natural" genealogy, then disappearing without a trace.

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As a flashpoint of history, the French Revolution is often seen to parallel Haiti's rebellious surge in the New World (Anderson 192-3). This parallel gesture, as we will see, is an attempt by many historians to forego the recognition of rival ontologies and cosmologies in and through the rumour of Voudoun. The passage through otherness of colonial conquest is forgotten in the spirit of revolution which passed to the French colony. Métraux thus states that "Haiti is essentially a country of Bourbons and Jacobins, children crushed under the wheels of carriages, tumbrels rattling over cobblestones, prisons and guillotines. It's as if Haiti has been perpetually frozen in the historical moment of its birth two centuries ago" (VH 10). He thus attempts to freeze his object of investigation at the moment of independence, rather than engage the fluid and perplexing relations as well as the indelible ruptures between metropole and colony. Moreover, this freezing arrests the force of Voudoun's rumour, a rhythm which circulates among adherents outside of elite politics. In a blinking nod to homogeneous, empty time, the dubious inheritance of colonial nationalism is fastened to the legacy of the French bourgeoisie who, well before 1789, forged their economic power from the vast slave-trade and slave labour of the colonies (BJ 47). In their bid for colonial representation, Saint Domingue's slave owners tied their fortunes to the deputies of the Third Estate so that the Tennis Court Oath was also a pledge to ensure that the liberty of France would become indivisible with slave emancipation.[18] As the world's most profitable colony in western colonial history, Saint Domingue is recognized only in assuming its place on a national, pre-revolutionary stage; the economic

disparities of the colony trading on a deeply entrenched dialectic of racial and class prejudice between France and the metropole (VH 8). The parallel gesture between French and Haitian liberation thus paralyzes rival imaginations of a non-national affective site of collectivity in Saint Domingue.

For C.L.R. James, a Marxist historian who also succumbs to the trope of nations awakening from slumber, it was the quarrel between the bourgeoisie and monarchy which mobilized the Paris masses, and that between the whites and mulattoes which "woke the sleeping slaves" (BJ 73). If one accepts his theory of a relational incursion between metropole and colony, it is upheld only by nominating class over race; by examining the colonial elite who forged an alliance, not in blood, but in property. However, by transferring insurgency into a product of historical materialism, James ensures the Black masses come into being as subjects only under the rubric of a marxist type revolution. Although no extensive discussion of his provocative thesis in The Black Jacobins is possible here, it seems clear that the "Negroes" awaken to rebellion within a rhetorical superstructure which supports a Marxist analysis of developing class consciousness. The parallel gesture between France and Saint Domingue thus upholds a class-based analysis which forgets the affective communal consciousness summoned in and through the rumour of Voudoun among the rebelling slaves. James thus locates the burden of dispossession in slavery-as-property, which is transformed by the vicissitudes of representation after independence. The long memory of nationalism is disrupted in a nostalgic dream that conjures the slave workers as a "modern proletariat" who have an "instinctive capacity" for revolutionary organization. He thus forecloses any counterhegemonic ideological production that might be found in black struggle (BJ 243). The prolific horizon of imagination inaugurated by slave rebellion to independence is flattened by the reproduction of labour and class ideology. The promise of freedom remains shackled to nationalism's or Marxian fixed horizon wherein the self-production through labour of rich and poor, white and black circulate as equal commodities within the fraternity of Western citizenship.

To be sure, James does not neglect the profound racial discrimination which divided Mulatto, white colonist, French and British aristocracy and bourgeoisie alike, nor does he ignore the suspicious anti-white sentiment which pervaded among blacks in pre and post-independence Haiti.[19] Indeed, Touissaint L'Ouverture becomes undone by the desire to maintain French ties, while underestimating the intense racism underlying all political overtures from the metropole. Moreover, while James sees the common bond of "Mulattoes and big whites" to be in property, he fails to explore the more nuanced terms of possession which evade the master/slave dialectic (BJ 44). Freedom for James is guaranteed by ensuring prosperity of the workers but the social frameworks imported by

West African slaves continued to survive in Saint Domingue; to an unimaginable extent, slaves struggled to keep family structures alive and were often enough successful. By regrouping and dividing between them the lands of the state, conjugal families began living in compounds which were in part bound together by their common root-*loa* or spirit gods. By the 1960s these compounds were also disintegrating, further weakening kinship ties, but links to ancestral spirits remained a cohesive force (VH 60). Commonality or belonging then were not coterminous with labour or landscape as property. To escape the circulations of imperialism and nationalism, a resistant community must have already been imagined.

Yet despite his Marxist analysis, another conception of freedom is evident in the opening pages of James' The Black Jacobins and escapes the paralyzing restrictions of a Marxist analysis. Voudoun's transgressive potential seems to carry this freedom in James though perhaps not as far as we have already travelled in exploring Voudoun's unspeakable history. In these opening pages, James links the cherished dream of freedom—in which the slaves vow to destroy the whites—which is carried in midnight celebrations of Voudoun in colonial Saint Dominge, to the Bantu's secret singing of the national anthem of Africa. Pregnant with latent possibilities, James' observations in 1938 are intended to forecast the future emancipation of colonial Africa (BJ 18). He later states that for the working slaves who joined the planned massacre at Le Cap led by High Priest Boukman in July 1791, "Voodoo was the medium of the conspiracy" (BJ 86). Yet rather than engage the vast conspiracy of silence which *is* the unspeakable community of Voudoun—a community which also carries the ardour of resistance— James voices liberty as the instinctive, swelling reaction of class consciousness to *slavery*. Voudoun is thus relegated to a ritual of song and dance, a misperception not unlike that of L'Ouverture who, as we have discussed, had forbidden the practice of voodoo (BJ 309). James thus occludes the wounding memory of *enslavement* and the violence to which the community of Voudoun attests and remembers—that is, the traumatic experience of both displacement *and* survival of torture, mutilation, murder, rape, disease and famine. James offers his insight to record but not to mobilize this memory of deprivation and insurrection in and through this site of collectivity which I have called the sacred community of Voudoun. One is thus obliged to remember/forget the legacy of violence and in so doing, deny the mobilization of a black consciousness carried in Voudoun through the maroons and slaves, which becomes endemic to the struggle in Saint Domingue.

This legacy of forgetting the indomitable inheritance of Voudoun also haunts the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture. The illustrious leader attempted to remain part of the French Republic and, along with his propensity for placating whites, especially the white *émigré* whom he admired, he became estranged from the peasant population and thus lost

support of the masses (BJ 263). The stifling of any rival imagination outside of the metropole was in L'Ouverture, I would argue, due in no small part to his disavowal of Voudoun. Along with his veneration for white society and aristocratic control, L'Ouverture could not think himself as part of a site of collectivity which would remain outside of the regime of the Republic. Of course, the historical complexities of L'Ouverture's success in the colony and his ultimate capture by the French would require extensive analysis which cannot be attempted here. However, a brief glance at his legendary status among the insurgents in Saint Domingue may offer some insight as to how L'Ouverture may have unknowingly embodied the spirit of Voudoun.

L'Ouverture's laudable reputation was earned due to an inexhaustible capacity for hard work; his prodigious activities in attending to military, economic and social matters of the colony; his extraordinary and persuasive rhetorical flair in letter writing; his humanitarian disposition, although not without its outburst of brutality and temperament; his offer of amnesty toward enemies; and his faithful devotion to Catholicism which led him to suppress Voudoun (Ott 127-128). Despite L'Ouverture's disavowal of Voudoun, his actions seemed to embody the rumour of Voudoun—its aura of mystery, its propensity for appearing and reappearing across Haiti, its uncanny knack for crisscrossing peasants communities and the country—for one was never sure where the revered leader would show up next. His rapid and elusive journeying across the island, much like the rumour of Voudoun, seemed endow the landscape itself with his ubiquitous presence. James argues that L'Ouverture had "deliberately cultivated this mysteriousnesss" when undergoing his activities, inspections and performances in the colony (BJ 249). One could say that mystery was embodied as a possession for L'Ouverture but in the absence of a greater and near inviolable link to a communal consciousness. As such, this propensity for disappearing and mystery secured his legendary status but not his life. L'Ouverture's story of dispossession ends and begins with a freedom which remains locked in the circuits of imperialism—it must be remembered that he liberated Haiti in order to remain a colony of France. His march to independence thus found him under constant surveillance in a French prison cell where, dejected and suffering from exposure, he died in 1803.

The revolutionary war between kinsmen in France became a war of heterogeneous casualties on the island of Saint Domingue, one which surpassed class analysis to include the deeper, insidious markers of racisms. As the aristocratic dynasties disintegrated in France, colonial racism wedged its way onto the Paris stage. It was buoyed by the liberatory fervour of the masses who grew repulsed by the horrors of slavery and to revile the "'aristocrats of the skin'" (qtd. in BJ 120).[20] Similarly, the Mulattoes and Blacks of Saint Domingue fought an interior class struggle while maintaining the veneer of a solid

front to the enemy. But to assess the real clash of consciousness one must delve beneath the skin of racism. Any dream of a parallel universe for the slaves of Saint Domingue, however, was eviscerated by the metropole's alienating terms of recognition. In the era of new world nationalism in Haiti, as in pre-revolutionary Saint Domingue, there has remained a silent refusal among historians to recognize blacks as existing in an intersubjective time with the metropole, as existing outside of the revolutionary moment in France. The late "awakening" to nationalism in France must thus be read against the latent memory of colonial contact passed on in and through the community of Voudoun.

While many of France's administrative and economic structures were exported to the colonies, the linguistic ties may have been attenuated by the largely illiterate slave population of Saint Domingue. The tune of liberty, equality, and fraternity was carried through Voudoun, as it were, without the words. While nationalist movements are invariably populist, the slaves of Saint Domingue did not share a common language or descent with the metropole (Anderson 48). Yet in the 1790s, most of the population of France also consisted of peasants who did not speak french. The linguistic re-capture of the colony in discourses of nationalism occured later. One must thus disagree with Anderson who suggests that if nationness has about it "an aura of fatality" it also "shows that from the start the nation was conceived in language, not in blood, and that one could be 'invited into' the imagined community" (Anderson 145). Rather, we will continue to return to the key differences which persist in the sacred community of Voudoun which imagines a self amid a non-national affective community that does not surrender to the "disinterestedness" of the state; a community whose sovereignty is not predicated on capitalism or identity politics; a comradeship which is not horizontal nor suffers the alienating affects of metaphysical enclosure; a modality of belonging which refuses to seek commonality by speaking *for* the dead, nor in abjuring loss. These strikingly different modalities of possession necessitate an analysis of the rise of a non-national site of collectivity in Saint Domingue which hovers outside and before the predestined map of history as Eurocentric tradition recognizes it.

The palpable silence surrounding the investment and entrenchment of Voudoun's community of the sacred and its rumour of slavery is evident in a damning period of isolation following Haitian independence in 1804. Black independence signalled a treachery against Western-based nation-building, including in the United States, a young nation in which economic advances were still tied to the bounty of southern slave plantations. As such, a declaration of "diplomatic quarantine" by France was also supported by America. Moreover, as an outcast of the international community, the island was strategically isolated from the economic and political world (Farmer 75). The U.S. did not officially recognize

Haiti until 1896. This paranoia however was sublimated by the desire to infiltrate world markets for the United States became Haiti's leading trading partner. Into the silence thus dropped the sharp division among Haitians between those who wished to participate in an increasingly global economy—the new elite—and the emerging peasantry who were solicited to produce commodities for an international market. The new elite of Haiti could not afford the loss of diplomatic recognition; their own survival was tied to continued export of subtropical commodities in the 1820s and 1830s (Farmer 76). The peasants turned their backs on such schemes, preferring self-sustaining, smaller local markets. In the end the elite won out and the shackles of slavery were exchanged for the complex bindings of foreign economic influence and domination. Britain soon counted Haiti as one of its three most vital trading partners (Farmer 77).

The real experience of isolation and containment, then, belonged to the mass of peasantry within Haiti. Large Haitian producers enlisted the distant service of the peasantry as small landholders to bulk or process the produce aimed for wider markets. While elite and bourgeois classes flourished on global markets, the peasants were confronted with spatial isolation, remaining caught in a near feudal structure, indeed one which survives today (Farmer 82). This dehumanizing experience of dominance through socioeconomic pressure among the Haitian peasantry, is a process which Edward Braithwaite describes as a "psychic maroonage" (Dayan 2). During the decades following independence in 1804, there ensued a gradual retreat of Catholicism, and the development of new religious forms and institutions, some formerly forbidden and hidden. These decades of alienation for the peasantry, argues Métraux, shaped the distinct culture and character of Haiti. Abandoned by the elite, the Haitian Revolution had freed the creative capacities of slaves (VH 11). While creole communities created the new consciousness necessary to imagine the nation in the Americas, "the ever-heightened importation of enslaved Africans limited the creolization of the slave population, keeping alive African traditions and an active resistance to *enslavement*, and not simply to *slavery*" (VH 8; original emphasis). Despite L'Ouverture's disavowal and Métraux's emphasis on a mythic and spontaneous eruption of revolutionary spirit, Voudoun continued to thrive among peasants and even in post-independence Haiti. As we will see in now turning to Hurston's encounter in Haiti in 1937, it is finally to the memory of *enslavement*, and to the ongoing legacy of violence, trauma and survival carried in the rumour which is constitutive of Voudoun's indomitable spirit of imagination. Into the silence of "world history," which seeks to eviscerate such divergent terms of recognition and resistance, Hurston finds the rumour of Voudoun still circulating among Haitian peasant communities.[21]

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Hurston's revisionist and imaginative account of Haitian history in Tell My Horse, could be read as yet another flagrant American invasion of Haiti. Haiti's entanglements with the U.S. and their fractious relations dated from before the Spanish-American war and were perhaps most pronounced during the American Marine occupation of Haiti from 1915-1934. Hurston is clearly intoxicated by the democratic fervour of the United States and wraps herself in the cloak of freedom and liberty upon her arrival in Haiti. She drags her readers through a chauvinistic polemic laced with bitter irony, observing that greater unity and progress for the Haitian Republic will be gained only by the few intellectuals struggling against Haiti's "blind political pirates and the inert mass of illiterates" (TH 81). She tacitly draws the doleful masses into the recurring trope of European nationalisms which finds a populace "awakening from sleep" in order to claim their natural inheritance, well-endowed by the vigilant gaze of steely-eyed capitalism. However, it is the urgent and realistic problems of public education, infrastructure and economics in Haiti which are Hurston's dominant concern; the realm of fantasy and dreaming in Haiti she sees as an attempt to turn away from the traumatic facts of history. She thus praises Divinaud as one of Haiti's courageous and dynamic young political leaders who "is no dreamer, no rattler-of-bones, no demagogue" (TH 80). The country's tragic history, she adds, is due to "the most striking phenomenon in Haiti to a visiting American. The habit of lying!" (TH 81). This mass of deception or the deception of Haiti's masses stretches, Hurston finds, "from the thatched hut to the mansion," producing a stultifying effect so that one turns away from Haiti's unpleasant realities by procuring a "childish and fantastic explanation [which] is ready at hand" (TH 82). With a dramatic sweeping aside of the memory of enslavement, Hurston shackles slavery to the suspended time of the post-independence victors who

> were trying to make a nation out of very diffident material. These few intelligent blacks and mulattoes set out to make a nation out of slaves to whom the very word government sounded like something vague and distant. Government was something, they felt, for masters and employers to worry over while one rested from the ardors of slavery. It has not yet come to be the concern of the great mass of Haitians.
> (TH 81)

Hurston's clear disdain for Haiti's divisive class consciousness —much to the horror of a C.L.R. James—seems to privilege the educated, upper class Haitian who is also implicated in the oppressive web of lies. The upper class Haitian lies about his knowledge of Voudoun "to save his own and the national pride" she surmises (TH 83).

Yet despite her recognition of Voudoun's pervasive adherents across class boundaries, she suggests that the problem of this explosive lying inhibits progress rather than understanding it as a modality of resistance to an insidious national inheritance. Hurston negates such a deployment of poetics and politics to instead chide the shiftless orators or "patriots" who rattle the bones of Christophe and L'Ouverture "for the poor peasants' breakfast." She compares them to the "Race Men" of the "tongue and lung era" in the United States whose rousing speeches were meant to mask the greater pain of economic disparity (TH 75). Whether "resting" or "awakening" the great masses figure in Hurston as the unwitting dupes of liberation. The flashpoint of history both blinds and binds Hurston from conjuring alternative modes of community which do not envision possession as a relationship of property or representation. As a result, she imagines nationalism as a right of ascension without contemplating its violent legacy of descent. Hurston thus enters a paradox in which one finds freedom from slavery only by abnegating the unwritten and unconscious modalities of that freedom.

This paradoxical understanding is further revealed in Hurston's remark that "Haitian class consciousness and the universal acceptance of divine right of the upper crust is a direct denial of the concept of democracy" (TH 75). The concept of democracy, of course, has predetermined borders which may exclude a peasant consciousness, and includes a horizontal kinship among the educated bourgeoisie, which claims its origins in post-independence Haiti. While Hurston vigilantly upholds the ideal of democratic government, this precise claim of inheritance is modified in and through her own complex crossing of what may be, for her, an uneasy public/private dimension of Voudoun.

This crossing of public and private dimensions may have further been precipitated by her discovery, not unlike Métraux, that regardless of their social status, most Haitians are affected (or infected, as they case may be), by tales of zombies, sorcerers and evil spirits, and many secretly consult Voudoun priests. Writing in the same period, Métraux cites the evidence of an *anonymous* Bishop who explains that "'[s]uperstition is so widespread and deep that it could be said to touch everyone. The best, even those who don't practise it, have to fight against the feelings they experience when faced with certain facts, certain signs which recall superstition to them" (VH 58). As Hurston and Métraux testify, the reach of Voudoun's rumour is felt among all classes as an affective, bodily experience, even if they have no direct experience of ritual practice nor participate in song or ceremony. It is important to note here the temporal aspect of an "experiential" realm by which one *recalls* superstition, as if memory itself were carried in the rumour of Voudoun. Before Métraux's informants can interpret Voudoun's modality of possession, they have

already experienced a bodily summons that may precede language but is nevertheless carried in the rumour.

Despite Voudoun's pervasive reach in this period, it is the exclusive use of Creole and the practice of Voudoun by peasants which is said to distinguish between the masses and the small, elite class of Mulattoes reared on Western modes of life and thought. American sociologist James G. Leyburn found this cleavage so pronounced, he likened it to "two different nations sharing the same country" (qtd. in VH 58).[22] Métraux, however, finds the differences exaggerated, noting the profound embededness of Voudoun among all classes. He cites a Haitian priest who "confesses" to being prone to such superstitions: "'The whole of one's being is impregnated with them, right to the bottom of the soul; the smallest detail of existence is dominated by them'" (VH 59). Hurston alludes to the paradox of Voudoun's striking embededness and disavowal in the country most incisively when she writes that "[a]s someone in America said of whiskey, Voodoo has more enemies in public and more friends in private than anything else in Haiti" (TH 92). This reference to hearsay ("as someone said"), similar to the "anonymous" and "confessional" sources of Métraux, hints at the fluctuating border governing the ostensibly public/private dimension of Voudoun. This interminable border crossing between the public and private, the community and nation, sets the scene for a resignification of Voudoun's terms of inheritance in relation to political, ontological and aesthetic modes of resistance. That Voudoun "possesses" the Haitian populace during Hurston's encounter in Haiti is an existential claim which, in its necessary disavowal across political and class boundaries (including that of foreigners who both fear and seek to appropriate the rumour), exceeds any notion of community which might be coterminous with that of the imagined nation.

One must thus contrast Voudoun's community of the sacred with the "free" surrender of the individual to the community which, as Partha Chatterjee argues, is the hegemonic project of nationalist modernity. Voudoun thus becomes a "suppressed narrative of community flowing through the substratum of liberal capitalist society" (Chatterjee 231). Rejecting Hegel's assertion that the elementary moment of social life is founded on contract, he suggests the *irreducible immediacy* in which human beings are born in society (Chatterjee 232; emphasis added). The rumour of Voudoun proliferates, not in order to preserve the sacred time of the nation-state, but may well contaminate the linguistic condition for national political participation. Voudoun's community of the sacred is not subject to the disciplinary mechanisms of the nation-state; rather, its violences and symbolic orders are re-routed in and through the rumour's unspeakable reach. On the threshold of the private/public, interior/exterior realms Voudoun's contagious poetic may indeed deflect

any address which locates and places a being within the larger, social rituals of interpollation. The rumour keeps turning away, refusing to reveal a public face.

One does not "awaken" to individual liberty, equality and fraternity—as the rhetorical gesture *par excellence* of the French Revolution—for Voudoun's hybrid discourse summons a body exists and thrives *before* linguistic interpollation of the colonial or subaltern subject in Haiti. As a hybrid discourse, Voudoun attempts to preserve an inviolable interiority which is *constitutive of community*. As we will see in chapter 2, Hurston's encounter with the rumour of Voudoun leads her to both perpetuate and disavow Voudoun, even while spreading the rumour as contagion throughout Tell My Horse. In so doing, she is summoned bodily to the sacred community of Voudoun, both implicated and constituted by its circulation of secrets, lies, myths and memories. Voudoun thus strays beyond the boundaries of a simple dialogic encounter; an encounter which also problematizes one's relationship to community. Freedom's trajectory in and through Voudoun's testimony may well follow an altogether *unrecognizable* path; a path which does not move from the unspeakable to the speakable realm of recognition that demarcates the borders governing the discursive trappings of the nation-state. Hurston chases the rumour, and in so doing does not redefine the linguistic terms of freedom, nor the discursive bounds of speaking communities, but may reveal how freedom from dehuminization and degradation gets under one's skin, burrows beneath the skin of racism and oppression.

Hurston's bodily summons to the sacred community of Voudoun does not operate within the ritual dimension of speech acts; her possession is one of immediacy. As we have seen at Archahaie, it is carried in her sentient body and is a momentous experience of dissolution. Benedict Anderson alludes to these more nuanced terms of recognition when he suggests that "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined" (Anderson 6). There is then no *apriori* condition for community—even of those who are in direct contact—for each is governed by the affective and perhaps ineffable domain of memory, desire and imagination. Similarly, one does not merely enter the sacred community of Voudoun, through a movement or commonality or consensus. It is in crossing this complex sphere of recognition—the now refracted arena of the social eviscerated by the detours and reversals of Haitian cosmology—which preserves Voudoun's sacred community.

The rumour of Voudoun circulates as a memory, a promise, a dream, a modality of possession which will not *respond* to the *call* of citizenship. Against the primary vulnerability and susceptibility to the "call of recognition that solicits existence" in the social-political domain of nations, Voudoun blasts through the forgetfulness of the

discontinuities, degradations and dehumanizations within the legacy of slavery and crossing the "psychic maroonage" of peasant communities, by calling forth its witnesses (Butler, Excitable 26). Voudoun's hybrid force, as Dayan argues and we will continue to see in chapter 3, "bears the hybrid history of the Caribbean, including in its practices not only the succession of local beliefs but the fragmented devices of those who came to colonize" (Dayan 27). Yet many attempts to document a geneaology of Voudoun's rumour among ethnographers, historians and even Hurston, seem to recapture the rumour within the call of nationhood. Moreover, Foucault argues that "[g]enealogy, as an analysis of descent, is [. . .] situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body" ("Nietzche" 148). Yet as we will continue to see, the rumour of Voudoun is passed on only by passing in and through the bodies of adherents. Thus while Foucault claims that "descent attaches itself to the body" ("Nietzche" 47), Voudoun's modality of possession may be an inheritance by which the sentient body is untethered from an oppressive historicity, and disappears and reappears in order to preserve bodily integrity.

The dislocations and displacements of the rumour of Voudoun remain powerful because, as Métraux observes,"it is vaudou's peculiar strength to lack entirely any centralization of practice, priesthood, or power" (VH 14). The indeterminate space of Voudoun's sacred community thus seems to echo the ongoing, ravaging displacements still suffered by Haitian peasant communities but also suggests the rumour's perhaps indomitable force. Writing in the 1990's, Dayan notes that there has been an increase in secret sects, *baya* (red-eyed evil spirits, often in the shape of animals) and zombies, even as the "traditional religion tied to the land, memory, and family disintegrates" in Haiti (Dayan 29). The forced movement of Haitian peasants to the cities—in a program orchestrated to install peasants into assembly industries—and the repeated massacres of peasant organizations is attenuated by the spirit of the sacred community of Voudoun. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen that if the poor cannot feed their loa, will they be able to feed themselves?

Deren, among other scholars, laments the degradation of some of Voudoun's ritual practice. She notes how the talking drums now make the rich tourists in the city dance (Dayan 31). Moreover, as economic disparity and political turmoil become worse in Haiti—as toxic trash from Philadelphia is dumped at the island of Gonaives and sold to peasants as fertilizer, contraband rice and cocaine—Deren suggests that "the rumours get more gruesome" (Dayan 32). Voudoun's survival and summons continues to challenge the conquest of consciousness which has often been considered endemic to colonial contact. One cannot then trace Voudoun to the precipice of history's fainting spells. Rather, one

must expose oneself bodily, as does Hurston, in and through the sensual corridors, violent refractions and seductive hollows of Voudoun's rumour, toward the enchanting and inviolable community of the sacred.

Notes

[1] As a provisional definition of "consciousness" I employ Spivak's distinction that "[c]onsciousness is not thought but rather the subject's irreducible intendedness towards the object." See Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia UP, 1994) 109.

[2] Voudoun has often been criticized as a source of political illegitimacy in America due to its prevalence among Haiti's illiterate population. George Packer argues that Haiti exist only as an abstraction for Americans, arguing that high ranking American officials consider Haiti a doomed waste of time, an exercise in "failed liberalism." In arguing in favour of the American occupation in Haiti, Packer suggests the problem of illiteracy and the impossibility of imposing democracy by force justifies their inaction. He states that "Former Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney took the point further, making the cultural case that Haitian society is too poor and irrational for our ideas [of democracy] to take root there—a variation of the argument that black people aren't ready for freedom; this too has a domestic counterpart in Charles Murray's 'They're too dumb to succeed.'" Packer cites The Nation in an article which sums up the ultimate decision for the invasion following the 1991 coup that ousted Aristide: "'The occupation of Haiti has nothing to do with democratic renewal but is instead a design for restoring the slightly raveled fabric of U.S. strategic and economic control that has held for most of this century.'" See George Packer, "Why We Are in Haiti," Dissent Winter 1995, 7-8.

[3] Please see Spivak "Subaltern" 66-111.

[4] The unspeakability of Voudoun's rumour is not to be confused with the use of "unspeakability" among poststructuralist theorists such as Judith Butler. Butler employs the terms strictly in terms of linguistics and speech act theory. It may be more closely association with Jacques Lacan's notion of the "real." For Lacan, the "real" is the third term in a tripartite formula of the symbolic and the imaginary. I employ the term here to suggest that the unspeakable rumour of Voudoun is an arena beyond the domain of the imaginary; it is the invisible thread which remains *prior to* the tear in the symbolic fabric which is already constitutive of Voudoun's traumatic testimony. The rumour may enact a movement in the domain of the imaginary, but in resisting the symbolic, it is perhaps a latent moment that is prior to language. This is not to say that the "real" is a moment of stasis or suspension for in remaining the impossible, it is also a stumbling point, it is that which one bumps up against. Please see Jacques Lacan, Four Fundamentals, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan, 1978 ed. (New York: Norton, 1981) 280.

[5] My conception of "the sacred" was influenced by Professor Marike Finlay-de Monchy who once noted during a classroom lecture that her role as a psychoanalyst was to "give people back their sacred." My use of the term here suggests a sacred domain of inviolable interiority which preserves a communal consciousness among Voudoun's adherents that crosses the boundaries of psychoanalytic and phenomenological theory. Similar to my mobilization of the terms "rumour" and "community," "the sacred community of Voudoun" and "Voudoun's community of the sacred" will be employed interchangeably and the term will grow in complexity and force throughout this paper. these two phrases are meant to designate a realm of inviolable interiority which preserves a communal consciousness among the Haitian peasantry. The rumour of Voudoun, as we will see, circulates in and through Voudoun's community of the sacred. As such, the repetition and re-staging of the rumour of Voudoun and of Voudoun's community of the sacred will exceed any reductive sense of exchange or possession which might be given or restored in the strict confines of the psychoanalytic process.

[6] Joan Dayan argues that in Haitian history, Voudoun has became associated with varying constructions of civilization or savagery. Duvalier's exploitation of Voudoun and his appropriation of its symbols and rituals, however, remains a flashpoint in contemporary history. She writes that with Duvalier, "Voudoun became synonymous with the Haitian nation, especially when François Duvalier contrived his myth of authenticity, his peculiar brand of *noirisme* or 'black essence.'" I will argue, however, that despite such exploitation, Voudoun's community of the sacred is rather a non-national communal consciousness which survives amid the silent history of anticolonial nationalism. See Joan Dayan, "Voudoun, or the Voice of the Gods," Sacred Possessions: Vodou, Santería, Obeah, and the Caribbean, ed. Margarite Fernández Olmos and Elizabeth Paravisini-Gebert (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, UP, 1997) 27.

[7] Wade Davis, Passage of Darkness: The Ethnobiology of the Haitian Zombie (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988); hereafter referred to as PD.

[8] Davis' source is J. Kerboull, Voodoo and Magic Practises (N.p: Barrie and Jenkins Communica, 1977).

[9] Davis cites the work of M. Laguerre, "Bizango: A Voodoo Secret Society in Haiti, " Secrecy, ed. S.K. Tefft (New York: Human Science P, 1980).

[10] Davis cites the work of G. F. Murray, "The Evolution of Haitian Peasant Land Tenure: A Case Study in Agrarian Adaptation to Population Growth," diss., Columbia U, 1977; and Laguerre.

[11] Laguerre 157.

[12] Stoller cites Alfred Métraux, Haiti: Blacks Peasants and Voodoo (New York: Universe, 1960).

[13] Maya Deren, Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti (New York: McPherson, 1953); hereafter referred to as DH.

[14] Davis cites Métraux, VH.

[15] The process of reclamation of the *ti bon ange* which remains below in the world of *Les Invisibles* (or the loa/gods) for one year and a day during the *Wété Mo Nan Dlo* ceremony ("return the dead from the water"), is described by Wade Davis. He explains that "[o]ne emerges from the womb an animal, the spiritual birth at initiation makes one human, but it is the final reemergence that marks one's birth as divine essence. The spirits in the *govi* [the soul or *ésprit* captured in a clay jar] are fed and clothed and then returned to the forest to dwell in trees and grottos, where they wait to be reborn. After the last of sixteen incarnations, the ésprit goes to Damballah Wedo, where it becomes undifferentiated as part of the *djo*, the cosmic breath that envelops the universe." See Davis, PD 188.

[16] Davis cites R. Dépestre, Change, Violence II, no. 9, (Paris: Seuil) 20.

[17] C.L.R. James argues in The Black Jacobins that Haiti should be viewed as the first modern republic, while Alfred Métraux declares that after the Haitian Revolution, "[t]he second independent republic of the New World had been born." C.L.R. James, The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution (London: Allison and Busby, 1980); hereafter referred to as BJ; Métraux, VH 9.

[18] When the French King chose to intimidate members of the Third Estate, the deputies convened at tennis-court and swore that being representatives of the people they would never adjourn. Gouy d'Arsy, leader of the colonists, boldly led his group of noblemen into this historic meeting. As leader, d'Arsy was offered unexpected but welcomed support by the bourgeoisie and so it was that the deputies admitted the principle of colonial representation in France. Full of confidence, these slave owners claimed 18 seats, but Mirabeau exposed their hypocrisy in a memorable speech in which he proclaimed: "'You claim representation proportionate to the number of the inhabitants. The free blacks are proprietors and tax-payers, and yet they have not been allowed to vote. And as for the slaves, either they are men or they are not; if the colonists consider them to be men, let them free them and make them electors and eligible for seats; if the contrary is the case, have we, in apportioning deputies according to the population of France, taken into consideration the number of our horses and our mules.'" In this way, the representatives had "tie[d] fortune San Domingo to the assembly of a people in revolution and thenceforth the history of liberty in France and of slave emancipation in San Domingo is one and indivisible." Please see James, BJ 60-61.

[19] On the question of race, James seems remarkably evasive and much of his historical account suffers from a series of prevarications that wind up relegating the racial factor to a position as incidental to the struggle. His analysis, in not adequately examining the interimplications of race and class, suggests a tacit disavowal of West African inheritance among the rebelling slaves.

[20] James cites M. Garran-Coulon, Rapport sur les Troubles de Saint Domingue, vol. 4 (Paris: 1798) 21.

[21] Voudoun's dynamic poetic, however, would not be recognized or read back in and through histories of Caribbean consciousness in relation to black aesthetic achievement. Saba Amon Saakana first challenges the dominance of European written literary forms in Haiti's literary tradition. He cites Michael Dash who writes that the existence of folk songs "not only established certain preoccupations in Haitian literature but created the possibility of a tradition that would produce the ***genuinely important artistic achievement of the post-Occupation period***'." This argument suggests the almost impossible leap it would seem, needed to imagine a poetic that might pre-date the onerous ruptures of nationalism. Saakana instead finds the lack of accessibility to literary sources and failure of more substantial research to uncover written and oral material as a tacit acknowledgment of the richness of literary tradition in Haiti. Saakana Amon Saba The Colonial Legacy in Caribbean Literature, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World, 1987) 32-33; Michael Dash, Literature and Ideology in Haiti (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1981).

[22] Métraux cites James G. Leyburn, The Haitian People (New Haven, Yale UP, 1945) 3-13.

II

Strange Displacements : Contagion, Carrying on and Killing the Rumour

> Hearing this, I determined to get at the secret of Zombies. The doctor said that I could render a great service to Haiti, but to medicine in general if I could discover this secret. But it might cost me a great deal to learn . . . He hesitated long and then said: '. . . Many Haitian intellectuals have curiosity but they know if they go to dabble in such matters, they may disappear permanently.' (*TH* 205)
>
> The devil, like the nightmare, rides the sleeper.
> —Karl Jung: Symbols of Transformation

Upon her arrival in Haiti in the winter of 1937, Hurston engages the complex circulation of secrets and stories circulating on the island and is soon possessed by the rumour of Voudoun. Her arrival in the capital of Port-au-Prince was, of course, preceded by the United States Marine Corps in 1915. The Marine invasion and subsequent armed occupation of Haiti (1915-1934) was mobilized to diffuse a crisis of political instability in Haiti and to protect American lives and holdings in the country. Haitian waters had already been invaded some 15 times by American warships in the century following independence (Farmer 88). Despite Haiti's so called century of "isolation" following independence, warships and waves of foreign capital meant that the island republic was entangled in outside economic and military interests. Following the proclamation of independence by Dessalines in 1804, the country had been split in two. Henry Christophe reigned as king of the north until 1820, while the Mulatto Piéton maintained a republican constitution. The dictatorships of Jean-Pierre Boyer (1820-33), who sought to unite Haiti with the Spanish reaches of the island, and Soulouque (1847-67) were followed by a seemingly unending series of *coup d'états*. Rampant dissatisfaction with the Geffrard presidency (1859-1867), due to radical economic instability, led to a riot in the poor quarter of Cap Haïtien. Agitators included the urban poor, small-scale merchants and middle classes alike, and the insurgent action was later supported by the business community—all called for an end to Geffrard's government. The government avoided insurrection by appealing to British naval power, thus setting an unfortunate precedent for foreign incursion (Farmer 83). Foreigners continued to play a pivotal and prying role in Haitian economics and politics, despite (or perhaps because of) the nearly universal refusal to recognize Haitian sovereignty.

American presence in Haiti would prevail, however, beginning with the U.S. involvement against Haiti in the Haitian-Dominican dispute for Dominican independence, and continuing into the Spanish-American war of 1898. Decades of virulent racism against Haitians and the diplomatic isolation of the republic did not extinguish a battle for trading

primacy. This was a battle built on economic exploitation, especially of peasant labour, by Britain, France, Germany and the United States. As leading exporter to Haiti, the United Sates increased its share of the Haitian market from 30% to 60% between 1870 and 1913 (qtd. in Farmer 85).[1] As foreign debts and economic instability surged in Haiti, revolution and insurrection ravaged the country. Internal political strife fanned by decades of exploitation left the island in turmoil with fragmented forces from the north confronting violent factions in the capital, leading to the murder of General and President Sam Vilbrun Guillaume Sam (March to July, 1915). Throughout the crisis, President Sam had jailed swelling numbers of political detainees. When his fall seemed imminent he chose to summarily execute 163 of the 173 prisoners held at the Pénitencier National and fled to the French embassy (Farmer 91). His murderous siege would be returned by a mob which formed outside the legation and stormed the embassy, hauling President Sam to the streets of Port-au-Prince to exact brutal justice. His Chief military officer Charles Oscar Etienne was murdered the following day.

Hurston's own account of President Guillaume's death in Tell My Horse is recorded in her chapter entitled "Rebirth of A Nation." She details his murder in a bloody revolution, the revolution which brought the American occupation to rescue Haiti, the "black daughter of France" (TH 93). In Hurston's vision, peace is precipitated by the American Marines aboard the battleship U.S.S. *Washington*; the ship's black smoke lifting above Haiti as a heroic "plume against the sky" (TH 72). Her prose and imagery is vivid as she recounts the inevitable invasion in a history of hindsight from the perspective of a fictional "prophet" who, Hurston writes, could have foretold that freedom from blood and tears for Haitians "was to come to them from another land and another people utterly unlike the Haitian people in any respect." This memorable cry of freedom would rise in "a Day [that] shall Mother a Howl" (TH 65). Despite Hurston's unabashed jingoism and veneration of nationalism, the Howl in her story comes to resonate with the lurid silence of zombies, the intrigue of sorcery, and the evasive spell of secret sects. Hurston, that is, does not play Haitian "myth" against history in her story, but rather unwittingly disseminates the rumour of Voudoun as an affective contagion. It is a contagion of fear and desire which is passed on in and through the rumour among Voudoun's adherents and non-adherents alike.

The fateful day of the palace insurrection is positioned in Hurston's text, not unlike the French Revolution, as a flashpoint in Haitian history: the Day which mothers a Howl that will be forever remembered in Haiti. Hurston writes in hushed tone, seamlessly mingling hearsay and secret, with an irony of keen inventiveness. The chief drama revolves around the political prisoners who were shot by supporters of the "monsterous" Guillaume

Sam. But an ominous "voice of the night" also joins the dialogue. "The voice of the night rose to say what it would" amid the rifle shots and frightened whispers scattered across the capital (TH 67). Hurston then tunes her voice to a "a whisper [which] ran along the edge of dawn" (TH 66) and summons the voice in the night to an intimate dialogue between Fannie, who presumably resides on a street of French foreigners, and a young boy. She is frightened by rifle shots and creeps out of her house to meet her neighbour Etienne. Fannie hails the boy in a whisper. He answers her concern with his own fear. As Hurston describes it, Etienne "crept close to her in the dark to give tongue to the speechless something that was reeking in the air" (TH 67). He tells Fannie of the death of the prisoners. When the young girl asks him how he knows the prisoners are dead, Etienne replies in great fear: "A whisper came to our door. A Voice—nobody saw who spoke. But it is certain. The people in the prison are dead" (TH 67). Etienne here may be a subtle allusion to the government's Chief military officer Charles Oscar Etienne who betrayed his people by failing to protect the prisoners. As noted earlier, he was discovered to have ordered the massacre in collusion with the President, and was killed along with Guillaume Sam who was dismembered and his body dragged through the streets of Port-au-Prince. In Hurston's story, however, it is a seemingly disembodied voice of darkness that seeps through the prison and through the porous skins of all Haitians who are within earshot of the whispers.

Tension and turmoil hovers over Haiti but remains unbroken by the prison massacre. Hurston writes: "[t]he people and the women of Port-au-Prince came to the prison that dawn morning. Winged tongues had whispered at every door, The people in the prison are dead! Our people in the prison are dead'" (TH 67). The allusion here to the French storming of the Bastille is inescapable. One might suggest that Hurston thus engages a nostalgia for what Lynn Hunt, in her study of the discursive and symbolic dimensions of French revolutionary practice, calls the supremacy of the spoken word in rejecting all models of the national past. Hunt argues that the "rhetoric of conspiracy" which dominated political discourse in France, even after the break with the Old Regime, had no self-limiting principle (qtd. in Looby 42).[2] French revolutionary rhetoric, she claims, proceeded unfettered by an "inner equilibrium" and thus gained momentum leading to greater and greater excesses. It was not, Hunt suggests, re-circulated or channelled into the textuality of the written instrument of the Constitution as in America, a move which, it is argued, created a viable republic (Looby 42). Hurston may indeed recall the spirit of revolutionary ardour in France—and Hunt the mythic moment of an exultant American supremacy inscribed in the written constitution—but here the conspiracy theory ends. For Hurston's dynamic poetic is repeated in a rhythm throughout her book, not to preserve or

to return to a point of rupture which signalled the rebirth of national stability in Haiti, but to summon an inviolable circulation of communal consciousness in and through the sacred community of Voudoun.

Hurston's account, at first flagrant in its blind invocation of American patriotism, soon betrays a longer memory: a cry which circulates in and among the traumas and terrors Voudoun's sacred community. When the voice of the night descends upon the prison, it spreads a shadow that is cast among all Haitians. The masses explode in fury over the prison murders. Hurston writes:

> The hunks of human flesh screamed of outrage. The blood screamed. The women screamed. The great cry went up from the bloody cells and hung over Haiti like smoke over ruin. And the sun rushed up from his slot in the horizon to listen. (TH 69)

Hurston engages the excesses and violent reach of the voice of the night but refuses to locate any point of reference for the reader. The "speechless something in the air" is more than a depiction of political strife—it pervades the air and wind, it is an elemental force. The night Howl which whispers in fragmented voices throughout the book, intersperses historical fact and Hurston's own fine spinning of stories, along with endless suggestions of hearsay and invented dialogue. Lies becomes fact, become myths which flow into secrets that hover on the biting edge of irony; an irony which quickens pulses, invades bodies, and feeds the memory of mass carnage. Hurston does not so much enrich the national imagination as summon readers to a rumour which suspends reference and seems unbounded in its imaginative reach. The heroic American invasion, finally, even in Hurston's account, does not arrest Voudoun's force but is rather absorbed by it. It has been said that the rigid authority and cruelty of the American Marines "so struck the Haitian imagination that many of the foreigners's qualities showed up in the contours and expressions of other loa" (Dayan 23). Likewise, the rumour of Voudoun continues to surface and recede in Hurston's text, crossing bodies and language to preserve its measure of inviolability. As we will continue to see, Hurston does not so much become implicated in the lie, as she is caught in the circuit of rumour, like the spider to a web.

Lying Habits: Passing the World from Porch Front to Hounfor

As discussed earlier, Hurston observes that self-deception is so rampant among blacks that the habit of lying is "the most striking phenomenon in Haiti to a visiting American . . . It is safe to say this art, pastime, expedient . . . is more than any other factor

responsible for Haiti's tragic history" (TH 81). Lying is here positioned on the side of inauthenticity, self-deception and political chaos. Hurston's desire to universalize an ungraspable knowledge leads her to totalize the behaviour of the masses and thus invites her history to speak only as it articulates the birth (or re-birth) of nationalism. Yet Hurston also repeats and re-names the lie in and through her text. For example, Hurston's tale of Celestina "The Black Joan of Arc" and her "marriage" to Simalo the goat is whispered to readers with the enchantment of a mambo priestess. And indeed Celestina was revered as a great houngan in Haiti. Tales of Celestina's march to the capital, Hurston suggests, are led by Ogoun Feraille, the god of war, who makes men "impervious to bullet and blade;" these stories which "precede [Celestina's] army to the capital" continue their march through the text in a complex of hearsay: "It is said that Celestina had great courage"; "Some say that she pronounced a terrible curse against [Michel Cicinnatus Leconte] whose victorious army drove [President] Simon from power" (TH 95-99).

Hurston later tells the story of Leconte's death, "the way the people tell it" capturing the contagion of the lurking conspiracy plots of usurpers who "grew bold by seeming immunity" (TH 105). The violent explosion of 8 August 1912 in the palace which sends Leconte to his death also brings an unsuccessful but heroic rescue attempt by the Minister of the Interior, Sansarique. The tale still circulates in Haiti so that "[n]o matter who tells the story and how, they dwell on the nobility of Sansarique. And indeed it is a thing to make songs about" (TH 110). Hurston's faithful rendering of these stories may at first seem a respectful gesture to the peasantry but the rumours futher circulate unabated and gain visceral force in the text. In chasing zombies—a subject to which we will return later—Hurston finds the fear of zombification "seeps over the country like a ground current of cold air (TH 179). This sentient engagement may be similar to the humid fear Hurston could smell on her tongue at the hounfor of Archahaie. Determined to find the reach and purpose of these fearful rumours, she soon finds that like the Bizango, they are already there—carried in and through her own disappearing body. Hurston is not zombified but rather experiences a bodily dissolution which may well be carried in the rumour of Voudoun, and which draws her to the experience of dispossession in witnessing the spirit possession at the temple of Archahaie.

Nevertheless, as the dutiful anthropologist, she also details the "functions" of the loa in serving social consciousness. The loa Guédé—a clowner, in torn black overcoat, cigar and hat who is full of burlesque when he mounts a rider (horse) to ridicule those in authority—is for Hurston the creation of the poor masses. He is mirrored with Carrefour, god of death. Deren by contrast, describes Guede, who also mirrors Legba (also known as the sun) as the night sun. She states that if "Legba was once Lord of Life, Guede is now

Lord of Resurrection; and the difference between them is Death, which is Guede" (DH 12). Hurston, by contrast, describes Guede as "the deification of the common people of Haiti" (TH 219). However, in casting an eye further on the horizon, she adds: "[p]erhaps it is natural for the god of the poor to be akin with the god of the dead, for there is something about poverty that smells of death" (TH 223). These line reverberates with a profound sentient embodiment that mingles in Hurston's own experience and memory, for it later *reappears* in her 1941 autobiography Dust Tracks on the Road when she describes the death of her mother. Hurston is thus caught in the rumour of Voudoun, which is itself an enigmatic crossings of secrets, likes, myths and memories, even while searching the interstices of a riddle. This puzzling arena may be what Deren alludes to in Ghede/Legba as "the difference between." Voudoun summons Hurston, that is, not with an accumulation of facts and hearsay, but by a *palpable silence*. In giving chase to the rumour of Voudoun she experiences a chiasmus of language and body—which appears and recedes on the horizon of her own experience. That is, in chasing the rumour she is summoned bodily toward the scene at Archahaie and experiences a palpable edge of fear and desire when witnessing a spirit-possession which courses through her limbs and marks a moment of bodily dissolution. He disappearing body, then, marks her entry into a communal consciousness.

Hurston's relentless search for the origins of the truth about Voudoun's sorcerers and secrets may parallel the enchantment of Guinée in Voudoun's community of the sacred. The loa are said never to die but to go under sea to an unlocatable place called Guinée. This is not the burial ground of dead ancestors, nor a geographical location in Haiti or even Africa. The loa move in relation to a human landscape—visiting the heads of initiates in ceremony, invading dreams and moments of individual communion, weaving in and through the spirit-body of Voudoun. And yet the kingdom of the gods, despite countless investigations, remains obscure and rather than comprehended must be, in Dayan's terms, "precisely apprehended" (Dayan 17). The loa are always there but forever displaced; their possession of any serviteur or rider is one of *immediacy*. Voudoun's modality of possession is passed on, not as property, but as perception. As such, the rumour of Voudoun seamlessly absorbs the landscape, the figures of history, the lineaments of Catholic iconography and the flesh of adherents. Hurston's passionate journey may have started with the fervour of scientific discovery but it resonates with a passion for place; it inaugurates a return, not to imagined origins, but to a horizon of imagination. In moving from observer to participant, she is summoned to the silence of Voudoun's rumour, and worships the gods by herself becoming one.

Hurston is however caught in a paradox whereby in order to interpret her observations and experiences as anthropologist she must attempt to *kill the rumour* in

which she has already participated.[3] Hurston seeks to understand and ascribe meaning to the rumour of Voudoun as anthropologist but enters Voudoun's elaborate cosmography of the cosmic mirror and stumbles through a transferential process in which she must either surrender to the ineffable scene of Voudoun, or attempt to usurp it. These "family secrets" of Voudoun thus summon her in a contagious circuit. Caught in the rumour, the desire of adherents is never fully renounced but proliferates while having no referential power. Moreover, in refusing to reveal a "public face" the rumour slips underground, or perhaps beneath the sea. Because the rumour is a permeable force, Hurston's sense of bodily dissolution leaves her unable to preserve a sense of "self." That is, the fiction of self-presence is threatened by her dissolution in the sacred community of Voudoun as experienced at Archahaie. Hurston continues to try and "self-police" by banishing her subject of investigation from the scene of her own consciousness. She attempts, in the words of Johannes Fabian, to "place the threat of the unconscious somewhere outside its own present" (Time and the Other 52). Hurston's disrupted and fragmented sense of "self" is preserved only in distancing her object of investigation, only in killing the rumour by positioning it outside of her own experiential realm. Rather than allowing herself to be haunted by the rumour's summons, to an intersubjective time which she cannot possess or recapture, her affective dissolution at Archahaie goes without further explanation in the text. Voudoun's poetic, in passing on a seductive and unconscious freedom through the rumour, preserves a measure of inviolability in the sacred community of Voudoun. The rumour's seductive modality of possession thus ensures that Hurston's projections and negations remain outside of the rumour's contagious circulations.

One must not mistake the rumour of Voudoun for Edouard Glissant's notion of a "counter-poetic" which describes the residue of a troubled unconscious deposited in the Martinican structures of speech. Glissant describes this process as "[t]he word as uncertainty, the word as whisper, noise, sonorous barrier to the silence imposed by darkness. The rhythm, continuously repeated because of a peculiar sense of time. Time which needs to be undated" (Glissant 162). It should be noted that the French West island of Martinique, unlike Haiti, was consumed by French Creole. The obscurity of Martinican speech, then, which Glissant calls "the phenomenon of immediacy," may not be a wholly welcome vigilance (Glissant 162). The opaqueness operates as merely a diversionary tactic in the Martinican's uncertain relation to the Other, an overarticulateness that demonstrates his or her powerlessness. The transcendental presence of the Other, that is, ushers in a taste for obscurity. The liberation from the traumas of slavery was, he argues, repeated in the trauma of "the trap of citizenship granted" (Glissant 161). Slavery, he contends, is a struggle without witnesses but from the depths of its silence emerges a potential, liberatory

counter-poetic. The strong feature of this counter-poetic is a mediation point, an intermediary stasis between self and Other, a sliver of light cast between a master/slave dialectic. Glissant states there is "the inability to create even an unconscious chronology, a result of the erasing memory in all of us. For history is not only absence for us, it is vertigo. This time that was never ours, we must now possess" (Glissant 161). Voudoun's modality of possession, as we have seen, enacts a surviving consciousness in and through the eruptive violence of time; summons forth witnesses in an unconscious rhythm that not only pervades the rumour as the silent seductions of oral testimony, but also permeates bodies in and through the sacred community of Voudoun. *Voudoun's dynamic poetic does not repeat lived history but rather summons a life-world.* As we will see, Voudoun's rumour is not a language of obscurity haunted by the looming presence of the Other, but a surviving structure of consciousness in-itself-for-itself.

Voudoun's unconscious poetic moves through the "lies" secrets and memories which circulate in Haiti and which may be "blind" but are nevertheless always known. The rumour of Voudoun, that is, is passed on in and through bodies as a "secret password" among adherents, even if this passage is not consciously known but rather "precisely apprehended." Rather than being fixed in time or to the binaries of dreaming and awakening, the rumour of Voudoun refuses to bring obscurity to light—the lie emerges and thrives in darkness. Christopher Bollas, a psychoanalyst who specializes in object-relations theory, calls the workings of the shadowy process of the unconscious, the domain of the "unthought-known" (Shadow 2). He is interested in the ways in which a human subject's early experiences of the "object" becomes a "shadow," as he puts it, which falls upon the ego and thereby leaves a trace of its existence in the adult (Shadow 3). The precise nature of the "secret" here relates to the complex workings of the structure of the ego which includes the internal object world—a complex and labyrinthian series of inside/outside relationship such as that between mother and child; the relation to self as object; the object as experiential realm (ss in the self-state 'inside' a family experience); as well as the relation of self to other. Bollas' central argument is that one already knows something of the character of these relationships, perhaps as a memory of early traumatic relationships, but has not yet *thought* them through (Shadow 3). The "object" in this way casts its shadow over the "self"—the history of internal relations as the interplay of internal/external reality—in one's experience of relations in the present moment. All ego operations, he argues, carry the trace of an object relation. The transferential and countertransferential process of psychoanlysis works in both the intrapsychic and intersubjective fields, then, through a series of re-presentations which enable this unthought-known to speak.

To understand Hurston's transferential process in the scene of Voudoun, in which she both catches and disseminates/perpetuates the rumour or lies of Voudoun, we can fruitfully make use of insights from the dialogic process in the psychoanalytic encounter. Bollas describes his experience as analyst with an analysand who, in a repeated series of bodily gesticulations, passes on the shadowy recesses of his unconscious. Bollas writes: "I felt that he [the analysand] was trying to share a secret with me within the transference, but it was a secret utterance that was prior to language and masked by its enigmatic quality" (Shadow 21). I want to suggest that this secret exchange in the dialogic process is similar to the movement of the rumour of Voudoun which is passed on through Hurston as an unconscious poetic. As an unconscious poetic, the rumour circulates freely through the sacred community of Voudoun by maintaining a measure of inviolability. That is, the rumour of Voudoun is not contaminated by an entry into a "public" order which is governed by prohibitions and repressions, but rather preserves a "self" which is constitutive of community.[4] The passing on of judicial censure or wisdom is preserved in and through Voudoun's community of the sacred. Further, this sense of "self" precedes what one might call the discursive or linguistic constructions of the "subject" in poststructuralist theory; a subject which arrives, as we will see, too late on the scene of Voudoun. The rumour is carried in and through a crossing of bodies/language, in and through the Middle Passage, suggesting that the rumour of Voudoun may indeed be a pre-linguistic inheritance. As we will discuss in further detail later, the movement of bodies in Voudoun—the mysterious tremblings of possession, the palpable fear carried on tongues and escaping through bodies—may be a secret inheritance which moves in and out of limbs and thus remains untethered from the deprivations and degredations of colonial conquest. How then might all of the foregoing explain Hurston's own passing on of this habit of blind lying in and through the rumour, as a mode of participation in Voudoun's communal consciousness?

In a chapter of The Shadow of the Object entitled "The Liar," Bollas explains his dilemma of treating an analysand who continually lies, telling fantastic tales of experiences in which he did not actually take part as an unwitting way of coping with an intolerable psychic reality, and of transfering this reality to the analyst. Bollas notes that many psychopathic liars find reality a threatening violation. Through the analysis, Bollas determines that the lie is in fact a metaphor which enables the analysand to "reproduce both the unconscious significance and the affect linked with the meaning" (175). As an evocative mode, metaphor does not merely *represent reality* but enables the analysand to re-order it through this seemingly omnipotent and endless manipulation of the object world. This passing on of the rumour (as object) in Haiti may parallel such dynamic and creative

manipulation. Already caught in the rumour, Hurston's summons to the scene of Voudoun and bodily dissolution at Archahaie signals her entry in the sacred community of Voudoun. In passing on the unspeakable rumour of Voudoun, or what Hurston calls "the habit of lying" in Haiti, Hurston awakens to a more sensual and phenomenal realm of reality. Her ear becomes attuned to the palpable fears of zombies and the exhilaration of desire coursing through the secrets and lies which she chases on her journey to uncover "the truth" of these stories. Her mouth opens wider to taste the awful fear of unspeakable evil coursing through the crowd at Archahaie. Her eyes widen to absorb the tortured face of the possessed man, in a scene which dissolves her own sense of bodily integrity. Voudoun's unconscious poetic is thus a complex modality of lying which does not bind one to reality but rather *keeps reality in play.*

The genesis of the lie, Bollas explains, is that in the telling there is a displacement, an affective and disconcerting shift from the speaker of the lie to the listener. Bollas explains that "[t]he liar's madness is made explicit, albeit unknowingly, in that traumatic moment when the other discovers that the world represented to him by the liar is not real" (188). One may first invert this relation in Voudoun and argue that the naming of madness is itself the lie in Voudoun. The lie is indeed the fractured psychic "reality" for the Haitian in whom madness may be another word for the violating displacements and the repeated attempts of a conquest of consciousness through the degradation of slavery, colonization and the "psychic maroonage" of the peasantry in post-independence Haiti. The "traumatic moment" of the lie carries this experiential realm but occurs for Hurston as an experience of dissolution, a loss of self-presence. Perhaps this is why Hurston writes that "[l]ife had plenty of flip for me at Archahaie" (TH 145). The metaphor of intrapsychic address in lying which would merely infect reality for the speaker of the lie, now turns to the metonymic displacement of bodies which are summoned in and through the rumour of Voudoun. Caught in the lie/rumour, Hurston is summoned to the scene of Voudoun and attempts to negotiate and interpret her own sense of being within a now fractious relation to her self. She is caught in the lie and in proliferating the rumour, not only carries the memory of a traumatic encounter in her own body, but also testifies to the affective memory of trauma and survival passed on in and through her disappearing body. The traumatic moment of the lie pervades the perceptual landscape of the sacred community of Voudoun.

Hurston's profound sense of displacement in confronting the "habit of lying" among the Haitian peasantry may strike a familiar cord to those who have read Mules and Men. As stated earlier, Hurston journeys to her home town of Eatonville, Florida to collect African American folklore and folk practices and these are recorded in Mules. While in Eatonville, Hurston is fascinated by the fantastic porch-front "lying sessions." These

marvellous tales are lies as Hurston receives and perceives them. In his introduction to Mules, Arnold Rampersand cites the famous passage in which George Thomas informs Hurston: "Zora, you come to de right place if lies is what you want, ah'm gointer lie up a nation" (Rampersand xxi). The weaving of lies in the tales are perpetuated by Hurston who adds her own fictional ornaments to the stories. Moreover, one never knows where to position Hurston as narrator in the text. Barbara Johnson argues that Hurston's perplexing structure of address in the narrative is manifested through a confusing series of reversals in a text which moves seamlessly from direct description to a direct address to the reader. She states that it is "impossible to tell whether Hurston the *narrator* is describing a strategy or *employing* one" ("Thresholds" 181; original emphasis). Hurston refuses to aim the spyglass of anthropology at her subjects in Eatonville and so refuses to offer an inside glance which might satisfy the curious or violating observer. Readers become, through the narrative, dazed participants within a complex modality of lying. This slippage of lies which Johnson encounters in Hurston's writing further resonates throughout Hurston's life. Most critics remain unable to pin Hurston down to a strict political position or to follow events in her life within a strict biographical account, for Hurston's life suggests a legacy of embodied lying.[5] Her encounter with the rumour of Voudoun may then carry an already familiar legacy of strange displacements from Eatonville to Haiti.

In returning to the lies Hurston encounters in Haiti, she repeats the rumour of Voudoun as one might the inner relations of a traumatic event. In other words, her bodily dissolution at Archahaie is testimony to the departures of trauma. Hurston does not re-present the trauma of collective loss or mourning but rather summons a silent recognition that, like the traumatic event, "is an extended experience that defies and propagates representation at once" (Butler, Excitable 36). The unspeakable rumour carries the affect of its historicity, passing on, not only the memory of loss but also the sensual and affective realms of survival, of a surviving imagination. For this reason, the trauma is already constituted by Voudoun, but not as an answerlessness or a frightful falling mute, as in the testimony of Holocaust survivor Paul Célan. Rather, the traumas of Voudoun summon a participation or integration into Voudoun's community of the sacred. If the social trauma is considered an "ongoing subjugation," the rumour of Voudoun turns this formulation inside/out. (Butler, Excitable 36-37). Hurston's departure is a summons to a communal consciousness. As such, in the excesses of the rumour's contagion, Voudoun's unconscious and dynamic poetic does not yield to a reductive or collective catharsis.

The rumour of Voudoun compels an unspeakable recognition that obviates any determinate institutionalized structure of address; it performs a liberatory gesture that remains "unknown" to those it summons but is enacted in and through a dissolution

between performer/spectator, self/community in Voudoun. This passage in and through darkness is an unconscious poetic which serves to transform a resistant structure of consciousness. From what may seem like a private terror of the possession by the man at Archahaie, or in Hurston as spectator, is a communal fear for, as she writes, "everybody seemed to feel it simultaneously" (TH 144). The fear is so humid it drips from the tongues of all observers, including Hurston, who thus participates in an affective experience of what one might call a communal possession. Rather than being bound or restricted to the violations and deprivation of trauma—an experiencing of dispossession that may turn one inward—the rumour of Voudoun contagions and so compels a community of witnesses. The integrity of the "self" does not suffer violating exposures but is rendered as, at least in part, inviolable in and through a communal consciousness. This realm of the unknown or unspeakable in Voudoun may be reminiscent of Franz Fanon's urge to the lose oneself in the "night of the absolute" as an indeterminate freedom which is not a modality of being *for* others but rather moves in and through others as a joyous alterity. Fanon writes that "[a] consciousness committed to experience is ignorant, has to be ignorant, of the essences and determinations of its being" (Fanon 134). In and through the rumour, Voudoun's adherents pass on an unconscious poetic that preserves an indeterminate and dynamic but communal consciousness. This consciousness is contagious but remains outside the domain of cultural intelligibility; it does not offer discursive recognition or reification in or out of a Hegelian formulation.

Voudoun is not *the* site of an insurgent consciousness-in-itself-for-itself, nor a moment of counter-insurgence, nor a contained counter-poetic, but rather carries the trace and is a dynamic projection toward a radically indeterminate structure of consciousness. In a reversal of Sartrean existentialism, one does not preserve authenticity by avoiding lying to oneself, but rather gains freedom from convention and violability in and through the rumour by upholding the "habit of lying." The prohibition of existence experienced through the seemingly unending waves of colonial and capitalist incursion in Haiti is thus exceeded by the unconscious poetics of the rumour of Voudoun. As we will continue to see, far from the repressed or colonized unconscious, the rumour of Voudoun works to restructure the unconscious ego, in a process which thus enacts a rival ontology of indeterminate freedom and creativity.

A Nation in mourning: Re-membering colonialism

While the immense shock of loss and fragmentation is often held as a universal theme under the wide rubric of modern and postmodern analysis, the so called colonization

of the unconscious may not be. One must be cautious in employing a universal application of Western psychoanalytic models in the Caribbean for the unconscious may indeed be highly culturally specific. The "crisis of the subject" familiar to subaltern and postcolonial discourses may offer an appropriate challenge to the Cartesian *cogito* in a Caribbean context but the precise contours of the crisis take on distinct, even contradictory constitutions in colonial Saint Domingue and an independent Haiti. Hurston not only experiences a specific phenomenon of encounter which crosses the boundaries of self/community but she crosses the scene of a national imaginary. Her summons is not to an indeterminate space but perhaps, in and through the land of Guinée, across the Middle Passage, through the sacred waterfalls of Haiti, and carried in the whispers of survival as the legacy of maroon bands passed on from Saint Domingue to the secret societies an independent Haiti. Hurston's ethnographic encounter—her desire to kill the rumour, her contagious catching and passing on of the rumour—suggests that the stakes of loss and mourning not only precede the nation but are also exceeded in and through the rumour of Voudoun. At these dangerous crossroads, Hurston carries the *affect* of pain, trauma, creativity, and memory in and through the rumour as a means not only to forestall but also to haunt the national imaginary. But where does the work of mourning begin?

One way of understanding the depths and gateways of Hurston's dissolution to the sacred community of Voudoun, is to return to the scene of colonial conquest and to the extensive traumas of slavery. As African American, one might say that the long memory of slavery is carried in Hurston as part of her self-constitution. For this reason, to begin to understand the profound human displacement suffered in the slave trade from West Africa to colonial Saint Domingue, one might start, as Wilson Harris does, with the Spanish conquest. In his essay "History, Fable and Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas," Harris starts his inquiry at the moment of conquest, writing Haitian "vodun" back in and through the void of history in the Caribbean, to examine the cleavage between historical conventions and what he terms "the arts of the imagination." Harris finds that due to the suspicion among many Haitian historians of representing a country deemed as overrun by pagan ritual, they avoided the mention of Voudoun, thereby installing an intellectual censorship over the "subconscious imagination." Reading Voudoun back through the traumatic history of Caribbean consciousness, Harris opens a compelling inquiry into "the Amerindian gateways between cultures which began obscurely and painfully to *witness* (long before limbo or vodun or the Middle Passage) to a native suffering community steeped in caveats of conquest" (Harris 11; emphasis added). In a fascinating and often lyrical discussion, novelist Harris attempts to recover a space through which one might find, in the ruins of colonial conquest, an architecture of consciousness built into the latent

memory of contact. That is, a imaginative opening of a surviving consciousness suggestive a embodied survival through the traumas of conquest, a survival which may indeed be latent in the landscape of the Caribbean.

Influenced by the work of Merleau-Ponty, Harris examines the myth of West Indian limbo and the limbo dance as a rhythm born on the slave ships of the Middle Passage.[6] Limbo, he argues, does not preserve the total recall of an African past but rather enacts a gateway to imagine new sovereignties out of those eclipsed by the traumas of radical displacement. The contortions of the limbo become a kind of re-assembly of the dismembered man or god in the Middle Passage, carried in the body. Haitian Voudoun is a similar bodily re-assembly of the god or gods. Voudoun, he argues, breaks the tribal monolith of the past in a dynamic process of absorption which re-assembles a cross-cultural community of families (Harris 16). The distinct cults or "nations" of Africa are then dramatically re-membered in the new communities of Haiti. He examines the similarities and differences between African and Haitian "vodun," focusing on the phenomenon of spirit-possession trances. He argues that Voudoun dances court a "subconscious community," while the dancer becomes a "dramatic agent of subconsciousness" (Harris 11). The shadowy and sleeping reflections of the dancer in the trance are, for Harris, an intentional and surviving crucible of consciousness.

The interior mode of the dancer is exteriorized so that life from within and without overlap; the scene cannot be read subjectively but rather as images of space, similar to that of an abstract painting. Harris thus compares the "primordial dancer" to the writer of fiction who both solicits and stages a world. Haitian Voudoun becomes part of a dramatic reconstitution of space, opening up what Harris terms as a "subconscious perspectival landscape" (Harris 23). This is not an unconscious escape from the tyranny of reality but rather a latent "drama of consciousness" (Harris 1). His emphasis on latency is an attempt to redress the self-contempt, sense of historylessness, lack of cohesion, and poverty of inner resources which he finds a commonplace in the Caribbean.

Glissant's suggestion of the plight of the Martinican, who needs to re-possess a time that is not his own, may be one example of such displacement. But latency also refers to an awakening of sleeping resources in Voudoun. The arguments of Harris may indeed summon a gateway to an understanding of Hurston's particular phenomenon of encounter at Archahaie in Haiti. The rumour which Hurston chases may be carried in the gestures/signs, the lies/limbs of Voudoun in and through the Middle Passage. As such, her bodily summons at Archahaie may be both witness to and testimony of an awakening but traumatic silence. The rumour is both permeable, in that it travels through her body, but also maintains a measure of inviolability for it summons a communal consciousness which

obviates the violating exposures of slavery. In other words, Hurston's dissolution is a contagion borne in and through the rumour but also carried to the scene of spirit-possession at the temple of Archahaie. No longer a witness, Hurston renders testimony through her disappearing body to a communal consciousness which may indeed be latent in the landscape. Like Harris' dancer, Hurston both summons and testifies to a modality of possession in Voudoun as a surviving consciousness. Agency is not and cannot be located in the rumour, or in Hurston, or in spectacle of the possessed man who crashes toward the center of events at Archahaie. The rumour circulates as a contagion, a surviving consciousness which thrives by being passed on and permeating bodies in and through the sacred community of Voudoun. This circulation remains unabated by social prohibition or the regulatory mechanisms of the nation state, or the shattering remains of traumatic legacies of violence and displacement. Voudoun's adherents do not re-claim a time which is not their own, but rather take possession of time, by calling others to witness.

Yet Harris also traces this latency of contact back to the terrifying incursion of Spanish conquest, a moment and fact which is, for him, the brooding place of a native imagination. Harris describes this brooding or haunting omen of death as a latent threshold never crossed—perhaps one that can be traced back to pre-Columbian times—thus assuming inner proportions roughly equivalent to a nervous breakdown (Harris 21). This reference to nervous breakdown, however, does no suggest the diagnosis of an illness seeking a psychoanalytic cure, but is more precisely related to the madness of the lie discussed earlier, which opens the labyrinths of consciousness by keeping reality in play.[7] While the legacy of conquest is likened to a wound which can never heal, this space also opens up a realm of resistance woven into the trauma of contact. The oppressed psychic space, he finds, is a landscape of imagination and survival carried in the victor/victim syndrome, a close cousin to Hegel's master/slave dialectic. Harris writes that psychological investigations of victims of major trauma, such as those of post-Hiroshima Japan, are similarly infused with omens of the future:

> It is as though the guilt of the victor stands on the threshold of a creative breakthrough in the darkening consciousness of the victim as prelude to the birthpangs of a new cosmos. It is not inconsistent, therefore, that we may discern, in the rubble of the Carib past, signs akin to a new ominous but renascent consciousness at the time of the Spanish conquest.
> (Harris 19)

The traumas which would normally interrupt the fecund explorations and disseminations of the unconscious are endowed by Harris with emancipatory potential. For indigenous populations during the Spanish Conquest who confront the ruptures of trauma—perhaps

not unlike the violent disruptions of slavery and revolution in Saint Domingue—this darkened passage through trauma leads "victims" to open up new labyrinths of consciousness as a modality of possession and freedom. His argument, which bears a striking resonance to Hegel's master/slave dialectic, interrupts the oppressive and stifling Hegelian formulation by suggesting a ritual mourning which is not only unending but also never-ending. This is a re-membering that is always a latent threshold; that is *already crossed* in the Caribbean. Voudoun may then carry a surviving rift in the structure of consciousness which remains dynamic but unspeakable in the histories of Caribbean consciousness.

If Voudoun enacts *a domain of inviolability between an inner desolation of trauma and an involution to the sacred community of Voudoun*, then the elusive rumour of Voudoun, like the artist, is at the crossroads of the lie and truth of community. The rumour of Voudoun roams along a dream-landscape which re-members Guinée and the legacy of a surviving consciousness by preserving an "unconscious freedom" which, like the dream, is evidence of the freely moving work of the unconscious. The lies, secrets, myths and memories which circulate and permeate bodies, which absorb the violences inherent in Haiti's traumatic histories, operate through a latent process of "collective condensations" and "disseminative scatter," a rhythm of unconscious activity which Bollas considers as "vital to unconscious creativity in living" (Cracking 5). The rumour is not a static "object" which internalizes a primary scene of trauma, but as we have seen, carries a plenitude of lived experience; it coheres in an intensity of communal consciousness. The uncanny moment of Hurston's dissolution is a drama of consciousness, a "genius of place" in Harris' terms, which enables survivors of trauma to *carry on*. Harris' "genius of place," may be related to Bollas' invocation of a "spirit of place." This spirit of place, Bollas argues, is an aesthetic moment, an "uncanny rapport with an object . . . an intense illusion of being selected by the environment for some deeply reverential experience" which he links to a pre-verbal and pre-representational registration of the mother's presence. This experience cannot be linked to a discrete object but "is placed instead with a notion of what the object thought to be sponsoring the event should be like: awesome and sacred" (Shadow 39).

One may extrapolate from this experience a thrilling moment in which one internalizes a fully integrated structure of his or her existence, although it may not be known. Hurston's encounter at Archahaie is precipitated by a rhythm of lies which pervade the Haitian landscape, each carrying a complex of relations which summon her to the scene of Voudoun. Her witnessing at Archahaie may be a moment when her experience of "self" dissolves in a communal consciousness. This is perhaps the *sacred* preserve of Voudoun's

community of the sacred. Further, this experience may be evocative resurrection of early ego condition but is also evidence of an "unconscious freedom" in and through the rumour of Voudoun. Voudoun's rumour is a rhythm, a modality of possession that remains both latent in the landscape and unknown, a dream-work which summons adherents, including Hurston, in and through the rumour's seductive hollows.

This "cleavage," or "trickster gateway," or "deathless flesh" of Voudoun is a latent syndrome which opens a gateway between possession and dispossession. The rumour of Voudoun upholds a measure of inviolability by permeating bodies. Indeed the rumour of Voudoun may embody such a passage in and through histories of Caribbean consciousness. Further, in his attempt to address the latent structure of the Caribbean consciousness as a "genius of place," Harris throws up what may be the most definitive challenge to a critical understanding of Voudoun's surviving consciousness. He describes this free movement as a plastic threshold, "an architecture of of consciousness or re-constitution of spaces in the West Indian psyche running through Negro limbo and [Voudoun] into sculptures of spaces equivalent to rooms of an Arawak cosmos (rooms of turtle, bird, lizard)" (Wilson 23). However, the insight can only be gleaned, he argues, "if we can imaginatively grasp it" (Wilson 23). In short, to get at these things one must lie, not to repeat a discrete epistemology, but to continually create and make something of one's experiences in order to survive. Thus in Hurston's urge to chase the secrets of zombies across the island of Haiti, we will now see how this experience of "precise apprehension" draws her through a labyrinth of Voudoun cosmography, a complex of cosmic mirrors that brings her back to her "self." Hurston bears witness to a traumatic encounter in and through the sacred community of Voudoun, and perpetuates the lie in order to carry on.

The Cloak of Voudoun: Chasing Zombies and Body Doubles

Hurston chases the rumour of Voudoun in an unrelenting attempt to uncover the truth of zombies and to locate their origins and imbrications within Haiti's infamous secret societies. In particular, she attempts to infiltrate the *secte rouge* and thereby penetrate the swell and fear of superstition beneath the "public face" of Voudoun. She tries, only to find this enigmatic mask turn away, and redouble, to challenge her initial conceptions. Her teleological march thus begins, in reverse. She says simply: "I came at it [the secret sects] backwards . . . I saw the effect and it aroused my curiosity to go seek the cause" (TH 199). Similarly Hurston as narrator backs her reader into a journey she experiences through her senses—suggesting an entry that itself mirrors the metaphysical cosmography of Voudoun's cosmic mirror. After spotting several random events and hearing "little things"

that she does not directly refer to in the text, Hurston comes to discover that the fear of secret societies among urban elite and peasants alike is palpable, but elusive. Her trusted maid, Lucille, whom Hurston calls one of her "few earthly friends" warns her against such an investigation of secret societies. When Hurston hears drums throbbing at a distance, not in the familiar deep sonorous pitch of the rada drums, but in a high repetitive pitch, she becomes curious as to the source of the sound and relates her experience to Lucille. But Lucille is so frightened upon hearing the drums that she refuses to leave the house. She warns Hurston that "the drum is not near. It is far away. But such things are very bad" (TH 200). Space and time are thus recovered by Hurston in order to seek the cause of the disturbance.

Lured by her desire to know more about these sects, another incident occurs while residing in Pacot. Hurston is awakened during the night when she smells a burning scent. She follows the scent and finds Joseph, her "yard-boy," enacting a small ceremony to drive away the cochon gris *qui mange' moun* (who eat people). Hurston tries to confront Joseph but he refuses to come out into the yard until daylight. Joseph goes to Hurston the following morning and tries to explain that he believes the secret sect want to take and eat his baby. Hurston accuses him of telling "'a fantastic lie'" but is soon interrupted by an upper class Haitian visitor. The visitor hears the exchange between Joseph and Hurston and when his hostess leaves the room, the visitor privately berates Joseph for spreading such "bad things" about Haiti. But Hurston overhears the dialogue between Joseph and the upper class visitor. The "Gros Negre," as Hurston refers to her visitor in the text, dismisses the fears of cannibalism as a mere figure of speech in Haiti (TH 202). In anticipating Hurston's concern, however, he asks whether she has heard of the expression "map mange' ou sans cel" (I'll eat you without salt). Hurston replies that she has heard the expression in the market, and he offers that this remark is merely part of the poetical charm of the peasants and their love of metaphor and simile. Significantly, neither of them refer to Joseph during their talk. This suspension of reference for Hurston and the unnamed "Gros Negre," is also a suspensful moment for the reader. The drama is heightened by the intense but secret reaction of the "Gros Negre. From the sound of the drums, to the burning smell, to her biting desire to learn more about these secret sects, Hurston writes '[t]he thing left me quivering with curiosity" (TH 203). While Hurston never possesses the truth of secret societies—they remain hidden in the unspeakable cloak of Voudoun—the rumour escapes from her lips, her limbs, and from the tongue of unbidden memory. The rumour of Voudoun, that is, gets under her skin. As such, the metaphor of "eating a man" will, quite literally, come to devour Hurston herself. Caught in the rumour, she is herself consumed in a moment of dissolution at Archahaie which suggests a chiasmus or crossing of bodies and

language in and through the rumour. In so doing, the unspeakable rumour of Voudoun seems to suggest a passage through the devouring and cannibalizing scourge of slavery and colonialism itself.

Despite sustained warnings from her maid that, as Hurston puts it, "[all] was not gold that glittered," she decides to visit Archahaie and live in the compound of a *bocor* (priest who practices black magic) to learn more about Voudoun. These warnings from her maid were specific, Hurston explains, but the fear was nebulous. Hurston's desire to seek the rumour is quickened by a circulation of fear that seems to have no referential power but is nevertheless all powerful. In the liminal state between fear and desire, the rumour stirs, beckons Hurston to discover more. As she traces the rumour, Hurston first strides in the sure footed steps of one who is trained in the institutionalized practice of rigour and reason, and she seeks to engage standard anthropological documentation and interpretation. Soon, however, she is left as dumb and prostrate as an initiate before the gods. Her journey continues over the course of several months as she follows leads and traces of information. Quickly however, the inquisitive anthropologist becomes engaged in a fictional fleet of foot. Her writing seems at first to be an attempt to document her linear journey of discovery to determine the truth behind Haiti's secret societies, and to record her experiences as they occur over time. But the narrative escapes in strange fragments of time, it flows in a process of condensation which is then disseminated in an extraordinary flight of imagination which hovers above the indeterminate locale of the secte rouge.

While never attending the secret ceremonies of the secte rouge, Hurston offers vivid descriptions of the sect as well as of the cochon gris and vinbrindingue societies. In so doing, she follows in the well trammelled path of ethnographers who, as we have seen, examine the role of these secret societies in Haiti, even while their very existence remains a source of considerable controversy. Not unlike Wade Davis, Hurston re-cites the testimony of her forebears in an accumulation, not of knowledge, but of hearsay. As discussed earlier, some ethnographers posit a relationship between the orthodox familial organization of Voudoun and the so called inversion of the Voudoun religion supposedly found in the secte rouge. The secte rouge is a group which one ethnographer writing in 1953 referred to as "a 'criminal secte' that drank blood and took pleasure in murder," a claim that is far more difficult to prove (PD 234).[8] A physician who Hurston encounters in Haiti tells her that the cochons gris society band together to eat human flesh and have nothing to do with Voudoun worship. They began, he states, during Haitian independence and the various names of societies are really attributed to one detestable force. The societies spread widely during the administration of President Geffrard (1858-1867) and continue to inspire fear due to their great secrecy of movement, even venturing into cemeteries to spirit away

bodies (TH 208-209). Undaunted, Hurston is mesmerized by the "quick hush of uneasiness" surrounding this phantasm of tales (TH 206).

He recounts the whispers of unnamed informants, sometimes confirming their claims without explanation. One notable source was "a man who is Haitian and also not a Haitian," and who "said something that suddenly connected all of these happening" (TH 206). The temporality is nearly impossible to follow in the non-linear narrative; it is a mixture of the near and the quick, with wide chasms of unclaimed and unaccountable events, again mirroring the spell of fear and desire. For example, upon entering a house in the Belair district while accompanied by a houngan, Hurston comes in contact with a bocor who lies to her by claiming that his temple was a place of Voudoun worship. She recounts with pride how she detected his fraudulent claims of what was in fact a secret society, an observation confirmed by a houngan who tells her that the cochon gris "used the name of voodoo to cloak their gatherings and evade arrest and extinction" (TH 207). Yet this discovery of the lie is perplexing, for the same individual may be both a houngan and bokor; that is, as Davis puts it, one might "be obliged to enter the realm of darkness to seek revenge for an innocent victim or to punish the perpetrator of evil" (PD 53). Hurston once again places herself in the swallow of what is now an all consuming riddle for readers. It is impossible to know who is lying in the narrative. The affective contagion of rumour for readers, as for Hurston, seems to summon a participation in perception through a phenomenology of reading in Hurston. What *feels* like an absence of "proof" in chasing the rumour is, paradoxically, precisely the "evidence" of immateriality needed to keep the rumour going.

Perhaps the most "revealing" evidence of this palpable dynamic of rumour summoned by Hurston's text occurs when Hurston describes a fascinating tale of a fictional meeting of the Secte Rouge. The tale, however, is not clearly designated as a meeting summoned in Hurston's imagination, as her fictional musing. It is not so much that, as reader, one need suspend reference or belief to enter Hurston's tale but that one must attempt to arrest the desire to succumb to the ecstasies of confusion carried in this textual encounter. Hurston enraptures readers, carrying the modality of possession and secrecy by drawing readers near to the scene of encounter and then far from it. She writes of the calling of a secret meeting in prose which repeats the rhythm and pace of her account of President Guillaume Sam and the butchered prisoners. Hurston writes of this clandestine meeting that "the whispered word was sent secretly, but swiftly by word of mouth to all the adepts" of a distant meeting which echoes the "incredible speed" of the members of the secte rouge (TH 211). She tells of humans being transformed into demons, growing tales and horns; she describes red-robed figures with candles blazing atop their heads; she

captures the looming threat of poisoning to be suffered by any adept who talks. She describes "[m]embers [who] came in like shadows" and later chant to the melody of drums, becoming one force, so that "now the whole body prepared to depart" (TH 212). From the rumour of Voudoun, Hurston walks through a sensual labyrinth of communal consciousness among adherents. Hurston offers no sources, no interpretation and no analysis. Her own unconscious poetic becomes an entangled narrative web which does not strangle the rumour, by chasing it down to its sources, but binds its enigmas more tightly. Hurston is not only infected by the rumour, she succeeds in spreading its contagion.

The connection between secret societies and zombies thus casts Hurston further into the rumour. Overwhelmed by stories of zombies upon her arrival in Haiti, Hurston seems to have entered the mimetic age of reproduction by securing the first photograph of a zombie, Felicia Felix-Mentor, whom she meets in a hospital ward. In this section of her book, Hurston directly addresses her reader, as she does in Mules, combining direct and indirect discourse. She asks rhetorically "what is the truth of zombies" and then answers that she does not know but that she has seen the broken remnants of Felix-Mentor. Rather than earnest truth-telling, Hurston offers her photography as honest evidence. During this portion of her Haitian account, Hurston does not seek to dispel the rumour but lays force to the proliferation of myth. She finds the rumours of zombies never cease to circulate in the form of random spottings among Haitians, and incidents of theft by "invisible hands." There are tragic tales of family members transformed into zombified beasts of burden. The fear among the poor and upper class Haitians alike, she says, "seeps over the country like a ground current of cold air" (TH 179). Of the looming threat of zombification, she addresses readers with the following provocation: "Think of the fiendishness of the thing" (TH 181). More than the incidents themselves, she dwells on the prolific circulation of stories, noting that "[i]t is not to be wondered that now and then when the rumour spreads that a Zombie has been found and recognized, that angry crowds gather and threaten violence to the persons alleged to be responsible of the crime" (TH 181). But responsibility for zombie is never quite claimed by Hurston who deftly negotiates but does not extinguish this "half-waking state" of the zombie. She dots the dream-landscape of Haiti with stories, but then adds that "[i]f embalming were custom, it would remove the possibility of zombies from the minds of the people" (TH 191). Hurston does not place herself inside the question of truth or lies, but forever departs from the narrative in order to fuel the rumour. Her elusive narrative authority thus seems to mirror the experience of her fading body at Archahaie.

Hurston describes the process of zombification by a bocor who may either chose a suitable body, or bring on a victim's death, and then in a midnight vigil, claim his soul

from the cemetery. Once the bocor awakens the dead, the victim is carried to the hounfor past the house where he had lived. Hurston explains that this is always done for

> [i]f the victim were not taken past his former house, later on he would recognize it and return. But once he is taken past, it is gone from his consciousness forever. It is as if it never existed for him. He is then taken to the hounfort and given a drop of a liquid, the formula for which is most secret. After that the victim is a Zombie. (TH 183)

One is perhaps tempted to note the reference to the victim's "house," a familiar metaphor for the body, which, in being "taken past his former house," might suggest either an experience of bodily excess, or the emptying out of a corporeal body figured in the house. But here we remain trapped in the ambiguities of language rather than the deeper recesses and the affective contagion of the rumour's crossings. To be taken past one's house may signify, in the process of zombification, a frightful existential dilemma. For as we have noted, the zombified body is divested of his *ti bon ange* or the spirit which connects him to the greater universe and to others within Voudoun's community of adherents. One who is zombified loses this intrinsic and vital recognition. The dead, soulless figure from the grave gains recognition only in being divested of a communal consciousness which is the peril of zombification. As such, a victim becomes a zombie in losing this sense of communal consciousness and thereby ceases to exist. The entire process, moreover, is carried through the mysterious labyrinths of a secret poison.

As Deren has suggested, it is not the fear of zombies which so plagues the peasantry but the threat of becoming an empty vessel without a connection to the loa through the ti-bon-ange and so to the life-force latent in the landscape and which slips beneath the sea. Similarly, Hurston begins her search for secret societies, we must remember, by backing readers into the journey. Her reversals are consistent with the Voudoun ritual in which, when a special loa guardian of a hounfor (parish) is not present, it is represented ritualistically. A figure called the *la-place* enters backwards to the ceremonial area, like a motion-picture projected in reverse. Deren says in this way time is "symbolically run backwards to a time before the death of a man whose gros-bon-ange eventually became his loa" (DH 35). Hurston's story of zombies seems to mirror such strange temporal movement as part of an unconscious rhythm of rumour which opens wider chasms of Voudoun's spirit of place. Hurston's text and body is drawn, and unwittingly refracts, Voudoun's cosmic mirror. As we have seen, the metaphor of "lying" escapes from Hurston, not as a suspension of reality, but to summon the deeper chasms of consciousness.[9] Lying in and through Hurston's testimony is a corporeal, kinetic, spatial and temporal *affect*, joining memory itself in an modular and dynamic structure of

consciousness. Rather than break the surface of Voudoun's cosmic mirror, Hurston sinks further into its depths. The circulation of rumour in Haiti does not produce a body, but rather, as we have seen with Hurston, summons a bodily dissolution in and through the sacred community of Voudoun.

Hurston's encounter with the rumour of Voudoun in Haiti remains unknown to her but is also one of palpable immediacy. Despite the refractions and reversals, the departures and summons she experiences, Hurston always returns to the scene of Voudoun. Her text mirrors her own dissolution into a communal consciousness, for Hurston's text also summons her readers to chase and return to an unspeakable silence which is Voudoun's "sprit of place." But if the rumour of Voudoun is repeated as the movement of an unconscious freedom, it also mourns an unending loss. The displacements and dehumanizations of slavery and colonialism do not die in, through, or with the rumour. That is to say, Hurston does not finally kill the rumour for it remains and circulates in Haiti in order to re-member a perpetual state of violence and survival which is carried in and through the rumour's gateway complex. We must now further consider how the rumour of Voudoun is borne and passes through these ruptures and traumas to the sacred community of Voudoun. We must return again to the silent but sensual testimony of trauma and dissolution in Hurston's text, which summons her disquieting participation in a surviving consciousness.

Notes

[1] Farmer cites Robert Rotberg, Haiti: The Politics of Squalor (Boston, Houghton, 1971) 110.

[2] Looby cites from the work of Lynn Hunt, Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution (Berkeley: U of California P, 1984) 51.

[3] Julie Kristeva suggests that interpretation represents appropriation and is thus "always an act of desire and murder: (qtd. in Gallop 27). Jane Gallop cites Julia Kristeva, "Within the Microcosm of the 'The Talking Cure,'" Interpreting Lacan ed. Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan (New Haven: Yale UP, 1980) 33.

[4] There continues to be a great dispute among anthropologists, ethnographers and philosophers as to how indigenous concepts of the self vary. Henriette Moor stipulates that "anthropological writings on indigenous concepts of the person and the self is that ethnographic data appear to support the poststructuralist and deconstructionist critique of the Cartesian Cogito." She explains that "indigenous concepts of the self vary in the way in which they conceptualize the relationship between self and non-self, the degree to which the mind (if it exists at all) is separated from body, and the manner in which agency and motivation are conceptualized as arising internally or externally to the self." As we have seen with a brief glance into Voudoun's cosmography of cosmic mirrors, Voudoun seems predicated on a dissolution of the self which is constitutive of community. Please see Henriette Moor, "Gendered Persons: Dialogues Between Anthropology and Psychoanalysis," Anthropology and Psychoanalysis: An Encounter through Culture, ed. Suzette Heald and Arian Deluz (New York: Routledge, 1994) 133-135. Moreover as we will see in chapter 3, the unconscious ego may not be limited to an intrasubjective and intrapsychic world but also includes the "natural" world. In Paul Radin's discussion of concept of the self in primitive societies, he suggests that "the objective from of the ego in such societies is generally only intelligible in terms of the external world and other egos. Instead of the ego as a thing-in-itself, its is seen as indissolubly integrated with other persons and with nature." Please see Michel Taussig, The Nervous System (New York: Routledge, 1992) 86; Taussig cites Paul Radin, Primitive Man as Philosopher (New York: Dover, 1957) 274. Freud's insistence that the Oedipus complex is the "nucleus of the neuroses" is sharply criticized by Franz Fanon who states that "[l]ike it or not, the Oedipus complex is far from coming into being among Negroes" and cites the poverty of Oedipal related neurosis in the French Antilles). Franz Fanon, Black Skin: White Masks trans. Charles Lam Markmann, (New York: Grove P, 1967) 151-152. In a later discussion of the concept latency surrounding the Spanish conquest, I will suggest that there is something before language, before the social, something in the structure of the unconscious in Haiti that has no truck with Oedipalization or an entry into Lacan's symbolic order.

[5] Hurston's masterful use of irony in her autobiography suggests just how embedded the legacy of embodied lying is in her life and work. Hurston recounts the story of an encounter with a "robust, gray-haired white man who had helped [her] get into the world" as a child." She explains that they would fish together and swap stories and how he spoke to her as an adult, offering his vision and guidance. She cites his words of advice from one of these sessions: "'Niggers lie and lie! Any time you catch folks lying, they are skeered of something. Lying is dodging. People with guts don't lie. They tell the truth and then if they have to, they fight it out. You lay yourself open by lying. The other fellow knows right off that you are skeered of him and he's more'n apt to tackle you. If he don't do nothing, he starts looking down on you from then on. Truth is a letter from courage. I want you to grow guts as you go along. So don't you let me hear of you lying. You'll get 'long all right if you do like I tell you. Nothing can't lick you if you never get skeered.'" Following an asterix, Hurston explains that Nigger in this context "means a weak, contemptible person of any race." Zora Neale Hurston, Dust Tracks on the Road: An Autobiography 2nd ed. ed and intro. Robert Hemenway, (Urbana, IL; U of Illinois P, 1984) 40-41. Raynaud Claudine highlights Hurston's endless diversionary tactics employed in her autobiography which shift in address from indirect speech to free indirect speech and 'narrated outer speech;' the latter structure of speech, Claudine notes, is "[a] hybrid mode between narration and reported speech which syntactically recalls direct speech yet still bears the marks of narration. Claudine argues that Hurston seeks not to create her "self" but rather to create her reader so that "[e]verything in Dust Tracks points to the subversion of the autobiographical mode, which becomes invested with competing discourses—folkloric material, tall tales . . . and which finally dissolves into 'scattering remarks,' list of I.O.Us..." Please see Raynaud Claudine, "Autobiography as a Lying Session:

Zora Neale Hurston's Dust Tracks on a Road," Black Feminist Criticism and Feminist Theory, ed. Joe Weixlmann and Houston A. Baker, Jr. (Greenwood, FL: Penkevill, 1988) 118 & 131.

[6] Harris explains that the "architecture of consciousness" within the Caribbean imagination is a conception in which the "...earth is not a relative nor absolute, feature; and the swimmer in dry land witnesses to a fluid room or dimension that was also relative when it occured." He equates this swimmer in dry land with Gabriel Garcia Marquez's observations regarding Latin-American literature's "form of reality" and to "Merleau-Ponty's endowment of the de facto situation with a figurative meaning beyond a historical stasis" Wilson Harris "History, Fable and Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas," text of the 1970 Edgar Mittelholzer Memorial Lectures, The National History and Arts Council Ministry of Information and Culture, (Georgetown, Guyana, 1930) 24-25.

[7] As anthropologist Paul Stoller argues, the psychoanalytic investigations into spirit-possession often treat pre-possession malady as tantamount to a psychic episode that "treats" through initiation into spirit possession. The initiation is viewed as a cathartic experience but, he argues, "fails to address the social, cultural (symbolic), for historical dimensions of spirit possession." Whereas Wilson Harris attempts to address such wider dimensions of possession by diagnosing the latent syndrome as a "disease" under the wider, abstract rubric of the Spanish conquest, his analysis short circuits the complex intersubjective and intrapsychic experience in the phenomenon of possession. This phenomenon "begins," as we have seen in Hurston, in and through the rumour of Voudoun, before the spectacle of spirit-possession. The rumour's contagion is mobilized in and through the sacred community of Voudoun, suggesting a permeability of bodies, a chiasmus of language and bodies in and through the rumour's contagious affect. This affect, moreover, in its suspensions and dissolutions, also implicates the non-adherent and further gives the rumour its force. The relationship of the rumour to the sacred community of Voudoun thus opens up an inviolable interiority reminiscent of Harris' drama of consciousness, or architectue of consciousness and will call for an exploration of the phenomenology of rumour in chapter 3. We will also consider the wider realm of sensual phenomena in and through Voudoun's complex cosmography. The phenomenological encounter may, as we will see, challenge Stoller's emphasis on the embodied memories carried in those who are spirit-possessed and instead posit a wider breadth of re-membering in the sacred community of Voudoun. See Stoller, EC 18.

[8] Wade Davis cites M. Rigaud, La tradition voudou et voudou haitien: Son temples, ses mystères, sa magie (Paris: Editions Niclaus, 1953) 249.

[9] I am indebted to Richard A. Hoehn's examination of the role of metaphor in relation to the lived-body, particularly in his study and phenomenological readings of changes in consciousness among social activists and his belief that "[a]t a pre-conscious level, metaphors reveal something about the structure of consciousness that thrust the metaphor into existence." Richard A. Hoehn, Up From Apathy (Nashville: Abingdon P, 1983) 47.

III

Chance Encounters : Dying, Testifying and the Fading Author

> During the procession with the bull I heard the most beautiful song that I heard in all of Haiti. . . . The sound of the words stayed with me long enough to write them down, but to my great regret the tune I intended to bring home in my mouth . . . escaped me like angels out of the Devil's mouth. (TH 223)
>
> Chance is not simply the drawing of lots, but raising the stakes in every attempt to master chance through the will to power, and give rise to the risk of an even greater chance.
>
> —Michel Foucault "Nietzche, Genealogy, History"

If modernity is indeed structured as a "historical accident," an unspeakable rift between consciousness and memory, no other singular event in Western history has come to constitute such a "shock experience" than the Holocaust (Newmark 238-240).[1] Yet Aimé Césaire, among others, launches an indictment against Europe's shameful but forgetful legacy of slavery and colonialism; he argues that the suffering and memory of countless millions still haunt the "conscious" of European civilizations. Against such a legacy, Césaire finds, Europe is spiritually indefensible.[2] To be sure, shock waves of trauma and slavery still reverberate in and through the Caribbean. But for Holocaust survivors and the generations who follow, interpretation and codification of this event has become deeply entrenched in political and social structures as well as ongoing power struggles. Kàli Tal, following Terrence Des Pres, discusses how the "Holocaust" has become a metonym, perhaps one of the most definitive in our contemporary moment, for the reign of evil on earth (Tal 7). She sets out to challenge the "'sacred'" nature of the Holocaust as subject and text which is set apart from other evils such as slavery. This move is not unlike the work of Judith Lewis Herman who also also seeks to re-define and re-visit the "episodic amnesia" of trauma, both in the testimony of survivors, and of the witnesses or testimonial audience in the form of public discourse and consciousness. She expands conceptions of trauma to include sexual abuse and political terror (Herman 7-9). The traumatic event, then, is not universal but bears a historicity of discrete and culturally specific contours in both the form and definition of testimony, witnessing and surviving. More important perhaps, in the domain of psychoanalysis, the investigations of trauma have come to haunt our understanding of the *phenomenon of encounter* itself.

Unlike the Holocaust, however, the ravages of the Middle Passage and the brutal reign of slavery in colonial Saint Domingue or post-independence Haiti are not unprecedented, nor represented as a transcendental signifier. This ominous passage of slavery is not a discrete event, nor does it represent a circumscribed or consistent community of "survivors." For those deemed as perpetual but haunting outsiders to

European consciousness, for those suffering an unending series of displacements as constitutive of contact with European conquest, trauma may be "the very origin of consciousness and all of life itself" (Caruth, Unclaimed 104). I will thus dispute the claim of noted Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, who argues that his generation invented a new literature—that of testimony (Felman and Laub 6). Rather, I will show how the rumour of Voudoun is an unconscious poetic which testifies to a surviving consciousness; one that both remembers and passes through the traumas of slavery and colonialism. This passage is an attempt to erect and preserve a domain of inviolability in and through Voudoun's community of the sacred.

In privileging the post-war period as the "age of testimony," Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub argue that the testimony of Holocaust survivors is a performative speech act which annihilates the possibility of address. As survivor, one's inability to assimilate the overwhelming experience of the the traumatic event results in an impossibility to stand outside it, to address or to imagine an Other. Further, the shock of bearing witness to the Holocaust is so profound that no witness can preserve a sense of bodily integrity, a wholeness, an inviolable separateness from the event (Felman and Laub 81). As such, one cannot directly face the immediate shock but experiences the violent event, as a form of belatedness (Caruth, Unclaimed 92). In a sense, then, one departs from the scene psychically and forgets the event; this is an experience of latency by which one registers the immediate shock by forgetting it, and thereby survives the witnessing. This experience of dispossession in the collapse of witnessing is also contagious, for in testifying to one's trauma, one also contaminates the listener in the experience. Those who testify and those who bear witness thus experience a departure which "dissolves all barriers, borders of time and place, of self and subjectivity" (Felman and Laub 58). For Hurston, the rumour of Voudoun summons her bodily to the scene at Archahaie and her bodily dissolution signals her entry into a communal consciousness. For this reason, I want to suggest that the paradox of *immediacy* in the rumour of Voudoun is that this experience of dissolution we have seen in Hurston, is already latent, that is, carried in the traumatic silence of the rumour. Hurston is summoned, not by a scene or experience of trauma, but by the lure of of a surviving consciousness borne of the traumas of slavery. The rumour of Voudoun does not expose bodies to the memory of trauma; it does not suggest a rupture in the symbolic fabric which is often a consequence of social trauma. Rather, the rumour of Voudoun re-members the violent dispossessions and deprivations of slavery as well as the legacy of surviving these traumas, by summoning witnesses to a communal consciousness. While Hurston's encounter may be incommensurable with an actual bodily engagement with the violences and terrors of slavery, her bodily dissolution in and through the sacred community of Voudoun serves as silent testimony in re-membering these violations.

Traumatic Visions: Dreams, Nightmares and Ethical awakenings

As we have seen, one cannot possess the rumour of Voudoun for it is passed on in and through bodies. In this way the rumour of Voudoun mobilizes a "family secret" among adherents which preserves a sense of self which is constitutive of community. One might extend this argument to say that the rumour moves between the intersubjective and intrapsychic fields in order to *dream* a community of the sacred. Hurston's infectious catching and perpetuating of the lies, myths, memories of Voudoun's rumour further perpetuates the elaborate dream-work carried in and through the sacred community of Voudoun. These lies and secrets move in and through the fluid corridors of Voudoun's cosmography of cosmic mirrors to both preserve and dream a consciousness that is latent in the landscape. This survival in Voudoun diverges from experiences of collective trauma across the history of human catastrophe, in which there is often a rupture in the prevailing sense of community (Erikson 188). Moreover, the reliving in daydreams and nightmares, flashbacks and hallucinations which are common for Holocaust survivors, is an unwitting attempt to repeat the traumatic memory in order to gain mastery over it. If survivors are unable to find socially meaningful forms of testimony, that is, if they cannot reintegrate in the domain of the social as a means of surviving their dispossession, they continue instead to possess or keep their "symptoms" (Herman 184). In sharp contrast, the dream-work of Voudoun's poetic is already "known" and preserves a communal consciousness as an idomitable "family secret." The secrets, lies, myths and memory circulate and crisscross the countryside as an elaborate dream-work no less pervasive than the ubiquitous loa, which is not merely a testimony to survival among the living, but also to the dying.

Voudoun cosmology has been called a cult of the dead by Maya Deren. The loa infiltrates the heads of adherents as a way of returning to a spirit of place. Adherents do not worship the loa as a way of recognizing the dead who inhabit an ancestral home, but to preserve a community-in-death. For example, the mirror loa of Legba (god of the crossroads) is Guede, a dark figure who attends meetings of the dead. While Legba is keeper of the gate who summons entry to the world of *Les Invisibles* (or the loa), he also invites the world of the loa who are the "cosmic cemetery of the souls of all the dead" (DH 37). While ceremonies begin with Legba's salute, all rituals conclude with a salute to Guede. Deren explains: "the souls of the dead enter the depths by the passage of which Guede is guardian, the loa and the life forces emerge from the same depth by the same road . . . He is the beginning and the end" (DH 38). This cosmography of cosmic mirrors then maintains a fluid relationship between loa and his devotee/horse as an uninterrupted family inheritance which summons both life and death. Voudoun gods do not die but are always being born or reconstructed It is not surprising then that rituals of death are directed against physical resurrection. Rites for the body are intended to sever the loa cord of the *gros-bon-*

ange (the *maît-tête* or divine loa which is the special agent or 'master of the head") and seperate the *gros-bon-ange* from the physical body, launching it back into the spiritual universe (DH 45). Upon physical death, the *ti bon ange* is reclaimed by the living and given new form.

This rhythm of life is captured or summoned in the rumour's contagion which infects adherents and, as we have seen in the temple at Archahaie, summons them bodily in and through a communal consciousness. Likewise, the tremblings of a devotee who succumbs to a spirit-possession at the hounfor may also infect and inhabit the body of another during ceremony. This contagion is constitutive of Voudoun's poetic which remains as vivid and ineffable as a dream. This dream-landscape is captured by Hurston in her own affective response to the rumour when she recounts her journey to seek out Haiti's zombies and secrets societies, as well as engages a fictional fleet of foot in describing an extraordinary meeting of the secte rouge. Likewise, Wade Davis describes his encounter with a "*séanceextraordinaire* " or inaugural feast of the Bizango. He depicts a secret procession of secte rouge members heading to the ritual feast: "The tables around us began to buzz with the rumour of the returning procession," he writes, and as the procession moves into the temple, he describes swirls of chalky dust, a dazzling woman making sweeping gestures and explains "[t]he power of the moment was dreamlike" (PD 265).

Katherine Dunham, a black graduate student in anthropology, celebrated dancer and choreographer who visited Haiti in 1936, observed that time takes on different dimensions in the "dream-like pattern of peasant life. As a "foreign girl" to Haiti she was "evidently part of the lost 'Nan Guinée family [who] lives in the community and gradually melts into daily life" (Dunham 82). Dunham is soon absorbed in the dream-scape of Haiti and is, in a sense, resurrected, at least in spirit, to the mythical homeland of Guinée. While Davis attempts to interpret his experience and thus remain outside of the dream-work, Hurston moves from the the intrapsychic (as an infection of fear and desire) to the intersubjective, as her experience of dissolution finally risks her sense of self. This movement is consistent with the constructions of dreams which, Bollas suggests, may well signal "a transfer from the unconscious aesthetic of the intersubjective to the poetics of intrapsychic experience" (Cracking 238). This exchange in Hurston is such that she is not only the dreamer but also part of the dream-work. She performs, in this sense, an ethics of death in awakening to a communal consciousness, as she is caught in the rumour of Voudoun and passes it on.

This awakening may well embody an appointment with the "real" that is also blind. In other words, Hurston's unconscious or "blind" passing on of the rumour of Voudoun is not an awakening of the self but is instead the passing on of awakening in and through the sacred community of Voudoun. Her bodily dissolution testifies to a surviving communal consciousness. Hurston is more than a medium of testimony, she is an accomplice to it. The rumour of Voudoun thus circulates as a *password among accomplices* in a circular

rhythm which journeys through the depths of Voudoun's cosmic mirror—in a chiasmus between perception and consciousness. In Voudoun, the dreamer becomes part of the dream-work becomes part of the dream.[3] The allegiance to the dead in Hurston's bodily summons is thus a communal offering to the living. She moves, like the loa, in and through the sacred community of Voudoun and so carries a life-world through her disappearing body.

During my own experience of reading Tell My Horse, I did not wake up to Hurston's message in the text but instead experienced an affective response to her bodily departure and so gave chase to the rumour. Threatened by an unknown loss, I wanted to flee from this sense of mourning by recovering Hurston's disappearing body. In this state, I came across a passage by Jane Gallop who, in reflecting upon the ethics of death and of dreaming asks: "Is the 'death of the author' a defense against something more threatening—a fading author, for example, an author who is neither wholly present nor master of desire?" (Gallop 182). My encounter with Hurston's text seemed like a similarly threatening experience. I had followed Hurston and become caught, like her, in the desires and fears of the rumours. I had accompanied her to the temple at Archahaie but in the moment of her dissolution, she took departure from me as reader. But Hurston's fading body did not so much threaten me as reader because I imagined her speaking-body performed the excesses of bodily intentionality—as one trained in poststructuralist theory I am accustomed to and expect such linguistic excesses. Perhaps in the end, it is because her body never *quite* slips away, never quite becomes an object of investigation. Where then could I locate *myself* in the text? And why was I so drawn to the ineffable space left behind? In the indeterminate space between the whispers of hearsay which led Hurston to give chase to Voudoun's sacred community and her bodily dissolution, I took departure from Hurston. Beyond my own experience of a phenomenology of reading, I cannot offer my own testimony to her departure but can only try to re-stage the event of her encounter, to re-enact the modality of her possession. And perhaps, in this way, offer my own story of possession to the reader.

Hurston's disappearing body thus marks the site of a sacred crossing for me as for Hurston. If the unspeakable rumour of Voudoun summons witnesses to Voudoun's community of the sacred, Hurston's dissolution also preserves a measure of inviolability. At the crossroads of psychoanalysis and phenomenology, her body disappears as an act of ritual mourning which re-members the legacy of trauma and survival in and through her participation in a communal consciousness. This is not merely a linguistic summons, for the memory and affect of trauma is not strictly discursive but carried in and through bodies, as we have seen in Harris' discussion of Voudoun on the slave-ships of the Middle Passage. Judith Herman notes that in testifying to trauma "[a] narrative that does not include the traumatic imagery and bodily sensations is barren and incomplete" (Herman

177). The rumour of Voudoun, as we have seen, exceeds language, it may even be a pre-linguistic phenomenon, but is nevertheless carried in language as well as in and through bodies to a world of sensual phenomena. As we shall explore more closely, the rumour is not strictly a dialogic exchange, but also summons a dream-scape that slips across the skin of the thundering Rada drums and ripples through the whispering waterfalls and sacred streams of Saut d'Eau in Haiti.

Elemental Enchantment: Rumour, Repetition and the Rhythm of Nature

Hurston's bodily disappearance in and through the rumour of Voudoun may well exemplify a passing on and dissolution into the elemental—the whispered wonder of a communal secret which was always already there, latent in the landscape. I want to argue that the rumour of Voudoun is also an elemental force that repeats a rhythm which probes unknown depths of dreaming and awakening, of music and memory; it escapes through limbs and laughter, through violence and vigilance, to sweep space and time itself within its untrammelled flow. In The Repeating Island, Cuban novelist and scholar Benítez-Rojo describes the Caribbean Peoples of the Sea as those who travel together toward the infinite as "a flux interrupted by rhythms which attempt to silence the noises with which their own social formations interrupts the discourse of Nature" (Benítez-Rojo 16-17). He offers what may be one of the richest poetic renderings of what he divines as an elemental discourse in Caribbean metaphysics:

> The Caribbean is the natural and indispensable realm of marine currents, of waves, of folds and double-folds, of fluidity and sinuosity. It is, in the final analysis, a culture of meta-archipelago: a chaos that returns, a detour without a purpose, a continual flow of paradoxes; it is a feed-back machine with asymmetrical workings, like the sea, the wind, the clouds, the uncanny novel, the food chain, the music of Malaya, Gödel's theorem and fractal mathematics. (Benítez-Roho 11)

One must be cautious however, in not too hastily ascribing this spell of movement to a redemptive primitivism or a hypnogogic reverie, for the rhythm also flows against the violence of insurrection and dispossession. The rumour of Voudoun does not remain static but absorbs and responds to the waves of incursions in Haiti, including, as discussed earlier, the violations and degredations perpetuated during the occupation in Haiti by the United States Marines.

For Benítez-Roho, however, the spirit of time's ecstasy is felt in what he calls the remarkable "supersyncretism" in the Caribbean, a place where "time unfolds irregularly and resists being captured by the cycles of clock and calendar" (Benítez-Roho 11). This distinct Caribbean cultural expression is, for him, not only due to the collision of African, Asian

and European components on the Plantation, but is also a chaos expressing the mystic loam of civilizations contributing to the Caribbean formation, evident in the uninterrupted line of syncretic objects in antiquity. There are correspondences between the Greek and Yoruba pantheons including a strong parallel between Hermes and Elegua, both "keepers of the gates." These mendacious protectors of the crossroad are strikingly similar to the loa Papa Legba "keeper of the crossroads" in Haiti (Benítez-Roho 15). This chaos or rhythm is performed then, not as a diachronic repetition of an ancient polemic, but as an erratic displacement, a dynamic poetic which surfaces and recedes in and through the Caribbean meta-archipelago.

One may first perceive that Benítez-Roho's description offers a striking parallel to the rumour of Voudoun. Yet his emphasis on meta-rhythms and winding discourse suddenly turn against the current of rumour which, as we have seen, is a modality of possession which also runs underground. By returning again to Hurston's encounter, as well as to the experience of other unwitting initiates, we will see how Benítez-Roho's melodious rhythms may strike a discordant note in the sacred community of Voudoun—a domain which preserves a measure of inviolability that cannot be defined by such meta-rhythms or apprehended through the reach of meta-discursive analysis.

Wade Davis provides a less enchanting view of Voudoun's cosmology by privileging the precision of scientific discourse against the misguided spell of espistemological integrity and wholeness in Haiti. He writes: "What distinguishes scientific thinking from that of tradition and . . . nonliterate cultures is the tendency of the latter to seek the most direct understanding of the world. The Vodounist spins a web of belief that is all-inclusive, that generates an illusion of total comprehension" (PD 182). As we have seen, the rumour is precisely a domain in which lies, hearsay, stories are a dynamic force that registers the challenge to Western modalities of belief and non-belief; it is not constitutive of a dissociation but of an ongoing creative dissemination. The rumour summons bodies from a depth of an unconscious poetic and communal consciousness which roams unfettered by espistemological integrity, or by reason's tyranny. Voudoun's poetic is latent in the landscape but opens out into the *unknown*. The call to a linguistic inheritance, then, arrives too late on the scene of Voudoun. Hurston's bodily dissolution suggests an inability to master science. While Lingis suggest that "words are prisons in which the breath of life is imprisoned in human form" we shall see instead how Voudoun's rumour is caught in an enveloping cosmic breath. Hurston's encounter will thus be positioned against that of Wade Davis and Katherine Dunham who also struggle between the urge to master the rumour, in the name of science, and the desire to surrender to the rumour's seductive hollows.

For Western audiences engaged in an endless search for self-presence, the rumour may be impossible to grasp. Katherine Dunham, like Davis, consistently mitigates between

the probing strains of science and a tireless self-examination in which she negotiates her desire to surrender to the scene of Voudoun. Following her observance of some ritual protocols during a initiation ceremony, she engages in a dance outside the hounfor and describes that

> [w]e danced, not as people dance in the houngfor, with the stress of possession or the escapism of hypnosis or for catharsis, but as I imagine dance must have been executed when body and being were more united, when form and flow and personal ecstasy became an exaltation of a superior sate of things, not necessarily a ritual to any one superior or being.
> (Dunham 109)

Her urge for dissolution is not rendered as participant in Voudoun's community of the sacred but as a Western observer. This sensual experience is not of a participation in perception, but of transcendence. Despite such exaltation, Dunham's experiences in Haiti seems to suggest the embodiment of trauma which is indeed latent in the landscape. In her book Island Possessed, she recalls the feeling of malaise at the housing compound of Leclerc (named after General Leclerc one of Haiti's most brutal despots) in which she resides. Dunham is contagioned by the "unquiet spirits of Leclerc" which she notes are no doubt due to the waves of revolution, invasion and slavery in Haiti (Dunham 248). Upon arriving at Leclerc, the malaise which "she alone seemed to feel" became so profound, it needed to be exorcized. She writes that the malaise "came from the very pavements and huge trunks of trees and overripe fruit and arrested motion of small lizards, which seemed to be listening to some sound or cry of death or agony" (Dunham 243). Her comments are suggestive of a mourning which is perceptible in and through the landscape as an elemental force. She also provides an example of the looming threat which leads her to exorcize rather than to engage the unending work of mourning among a peasant population for whom the wounds of slavery and colonialism are not only evident of traumatic displacement but also modalities of survival. Her desire to flee from the potential exhilaration of such an embodiment, to consume time, is an investigation which must remain the work of another paper.

For our purposes now, Dunham helps to suggest how landscape and memory are constitutive of the rhythm of rumour. In re-tracing Dunham's steps I turned to the work of David Abrams who has studied the affinity between language and the animate landscape embodied in the myths, magical practices and discourses of oral cultures and among contemporary indigenous tribes. Often, these "peoples-of place" are topophiliac in that their stories inhabit a cyclical time enacted and remembered in the repetition of mythic events. These stories perform and ritually enact a world which is responsive to the multiple sounds and rhythms of the non-human surrounding and is indissolubly place-specific. One example is the Dreamtime stories of the Aboriginals in Australia (SS 88-89). Abrams

suggests that these stories are a time out of time, a time hidden within the evident world and manifest presence of land when the earth was still in the half-waking state—that is, before contact with the British in 1788. In the stories and myths, Ancestors transform and metamorphize into plants and animals. These meandering songlines crisscross the Australian continent, passing through multiple tribal areas where "spirit children" are deposited in the imagination. The Dreamtime is enacted as an ongoing and renewed event passed on to Aboriginal peoples in the perpetual emerging of the world from an indeterminate state into a waking reality (SS 160-169). It is for Abrams the suggestion of a "primordial sacred language" by which peoples-of-place engage the rhythm of the more-than-human world, and as their own rhythms form a greater world.

Far from positing a precise arena for the cure of topophilia, or a domain to cure the symptoms of trauma, Voudoun's "spirt of place" journeys forth by devouring time, rather than heeding the rhythms of a consistent flow of nature. The rumour of Voudoun, that is, already carries the legacy of displacement. Voudoun's community of the sacred does not merely possesses time, it passes through time and, in a sense, creates time rather than submitting to it. Following Merleau-Ponty, Abrams argues that in order to learn a community's language, (or to speak a community), it is necessary "to enter the language with one's body, to begin to move within it" (SS 83). But as we have seen with Hurston, she does not so much infiltrate Haiti's secret societies or uncover the truth of zombies as is summoned to Voudoun's community of the sacred. She is caught by the contagion of rumour which escapes from her limbs, takes unconscious flight in her poetics, speaks in the silent tongue of unbidden memory. These stories of secret societies and zombification affectively *consume* Hurston, invading her consciousness.

In late June of 1937, months after being warned not to pursue the study of Petro gods (malevolent demons) and after hearing endless tales and fears of poisoning by secret sects and bocors, Hurston became violently ill. She writes to her friend Henry Allen Moe that "'[i]t seems that some of my destinations and some of my accessions have been whispered into ears that heard. In consequence, just as mysteriously as the information travelled, I HAVE HAD A VIOLENT GASTRIC DISTURBANCE.'"[4] Hurston's biographer Robert Hemenway states that she was "convinced that her illness and her voodoo studies were related" (Hemenway 248). This legacy of gastric violence is consistent with Voudoun's indomitable appetite. Dayan argues that despite repeated attempts to banish Voudoun's adherents, Voudoun survives "[b]y incorporating and consuming (or as one rather well-read houngan told me, 'by cannibalizing') the trapping, prayers, and representations of Catholicism" (Dayan 27). Indeed, metaphors of consumption are evident in the stories of zombies who prey on the curious and among the secret societies, such as the cochon gris "qui mange' moun' (who eat people). Offerings to

the loa in the form of animal sacrifices during Haiti's major feasting are also called the *mangé sec*, or *mangé Guinée* (DH 213).[5]

My own reading of Hurston's departure, in an albeit far removed textual encounter, was first felt in my stomach, as a dropping out, an ache, a palpable absence. Mine was a bodily consumption only satiated by the desire to know more. The rumour of Voudoun, however, is not fuelled by the metaphors of consumption themselves, but rather by an all consuming silence carried in and through these metaphors. This silence may be a bodily summons to a participation in perception. Merleau-Ponty argues that "what is without place must be initiated *by* the body to all the others and to nature" ("Eye and Mind" 146; original emphasis). As initiate to Voudoun, one is not only contagioned or consumed by the rumour but also passes it on. The body is not the locus of possession but a permeable site of creation and dissolution in and through Voudoun's community of the sacred. Hurston similarly draws her readers to consume the stories in and through her text and so perpetuates Voudoun's poetic, or spirit of improvisation. It should be recalled that sacred forces do not converge in the body of adherents in Voudoun but rather escape from them. For example, participants and witnesses to ceremonial events around the hounfor peristyle may suddenly jerk violently when caught in an experience of spirit possession. Maya Deren describes the experience of "a woman who was accidentally jarred by the violent *débâtements*, freezes on one leg— as if the contact itself had been a contagion—lurches forward, also caught up in the drums" (DH 255; original emphasis). The movement of the rumour courses through bodies but also journeys through the rumbling drums which Hurston observed seems to be inside the bodies of performers in the Caribbean. It is clear that Voudoun's rumour does not lead to a scene of ritual enactment in which one repeats the losses inherent in displacement. Instead, the rumour's contagion is carried across a realm of sensual phenomena, in and through bodies, to summon a dream-landscape. This dream-landscape in turn inhabits a complex perceptual world which journeys in and through the bodies of adherents. In passing on the rumour of Voudoun, witnesses participate in a communal consciousness as a sacred measure of inviolability which not only carries the legacy of traumatic violence and survival, but also mitigates against ongoing violating exposures.

Time does not stand still in Voudoun, but as Merleau-Ponty writes, "calls the others to witness" in and through the rumour of Voudoun (Primacy 69). We can see that Voudoun's testimony operates in a manner quite opposed to the conceptions of testimony rendered by Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub. As it is carried in Voudoun, the traumatic event summons witnesses rather than solicits confession which may then be re-integrated into a symbolic fabric, or as a means to recover the ruptured community in collective trauma. Deren notes that one need not understand Voudoun's metaphysics in order to participate in it. In and through the drumming and dancing of ritual performance the

metaphysics of Voudoun are *unconsciously absorbed by the participant*. She writes that "[w]hen a serviteur speaks of Voudoun, he speaks, as it were 'after the fact,' from a point of view already determined by his participation and one so deeply 'natural' to him that his is not aware of it as a particular point of view" (DH 93).[6] Whereas survivors of trauma may recover from their "symptoms" through the "talking cure" in which they bear witness to repressed events and so overcome their psychic wounds, Voudoun's rumour is passed on as an unconscious poetic. As Hurston is caught in the rumour she is also summoned bodily to a participation in perception.

It is difficult for this reason to seperate the testimony of Voudoun from the witnessing. Hurston's experience of dissolution and her gastric upset, for example, already suggests the embodiment of trauma. Voudoun's adherents thus operate as liminal trickster figures, not unlike the sorcerers and shamans who appear in times of crisis to erode the character of conquest. Neither Hurston, nor the loa, nor his rider, nor the houngan, nor the bocor are the precise locus of traumatic memory. One is not contagioned, strictly speaking, by the spectacle of spirit possession for the latency remains in the dream-landscape which summons these bodies to the scene at Archahaie. By contrast, Abrams argues that it is the shamans or medicine people "who most fully remember the primordial sacred language and are able to slip, at will, out of the purely human discourse in order to converse directly with the powers" (SS 86). Yet in recounting his own journey to study the relationship between magic and medicine among traditional sorcerers in Indonesia, he was intrigued to find that the village inhabitants spoke of these figures in low voices, declaring these sorcerers witches and dark magicians who afflict the healthy only to heal them later. They spoke of magic engaged in for harmful, evil purposes, none of which Abrams could substantiate during his contact with magicians and shamans. Still, the sorcerers never attempted to counter the rumours, allowing the suspicions to circulate unabated. Through the *agency* of such rumour, Abrams surmises, that sorcerers were able to attain a measure of privacy (SS 5-6). Yet how might such protected "privacy" be reconsidered in Voudoun as a circulation of rumour which preserves a communal consciousness as a measure of inviolability? The rumour of Voudoun does not converge in any one body but rather circulates freely to uphold a communal arena of inviolability. Often feared but not fathomed, the rumour of Voudoun is not conspiratorial but participatory, each whisper serving to re-member the legacy of trauma and survival in and through the sacred community of Voudoun. It is the inviolable permeability of the rumour which upholds an insurgent consciousness through the paradox of an *embodied metamorphosis*.

For Hurston, Dunham and Hurston, the invocation to witness is an experience which remains impenetrable but deeply embodied. As if summoned to the depths of Voudoun's cosmic mirrors, one can further glean this experience of "possession" in Hurston's description of a spirit-possession recounted by Dr. Reser, a white man and a

former ship's pharmacist who settled in Haiti when the American Marines invaded the country in 1915. He worked in an asylum on the outskirts of Pont Beudette and soon gained an impressive reputation as a respected houngan. Hurston is captivated by Reser's dramatic storytelling and is soon caught in a contagion, describing a striking metamorphosis of the esteemed doctor, and of Hurston herself, as he transforms before her eyes:

> His blue-gray eyes glowed, but at the same time they drew far back into his head as if they went inside to speak. He told of marvelous revelations of the Brave Guedé cult. And as he spoke, he moved farther and farther from known land and into the territory of myths and mists. Before our very eyes, he walked out of his Nordic body and changed. (TH 257)

Her description is sensual, plunging into the depths of the rumour's seductive hollow, only to resurface as evasiveness. Hurston clearly experiences a sense of displacement in observing the possession of Dr. Reser. She thus tries to locate herself by interpreting the scene through the mapping of a familiar myth. In later reflecting upon her experience with Dr. Reser she writes that "[t]hen I knew how Moses felt when he beheld the burning bush. Moses had seen fires and he had seen bushes, but he had never seen a bush with a fiery ego and I had never seen a man who dwelt in flame, who was coldly afire in the pores" (TH 257). Hurston's own porousness as artist may enable her to experience an affective encounter but not to appropriate the elemental force of Voudoun. The obsessive phantasms and absences of the doctor's story are passed on when she leaves the disappearing or fading body of the doctor without further analysis. Her words thus mark a silent passage in and through which the public face of Voudoun again turns away.

Likewise, rather than offering an account of her dissolution at Archahaie, which Hurston may not be able to face, she attempts to turn away from it. This is no doubt the result of an affective encounter so profound that the scientific spyglass of anthropology ends up turning back on Hurston to magnify a discordant and fragmented sense of self. Like Hurston, Deren is similarly caught in an experience of possession which she terms a "subtle thinning out of consciousness" (DH 253). Her experience is difficult to reconcile and the urge at first seems to mimic Dunham's in seeking a sense of spiritual transcendence. As she watches the bodies of dancers in ceremony undulate with a wave-like motion, she asks

> [w]hat secret source of power flows to them, rocks them and revolves them, as on a roundabout the bright seeds prance and pursue, eternally absolved of fatigue, failure and fall? I have but to rise, to step forward to become part of this glorious movement, flowing with it, its motion becoming mine, as the roll of the sea might become the undulation of my own body. At such moments one does not move to the sound, one is

> the movement of the sound, created and borne by it; hence, nothing is difficult. (DH 252-253)

However, after a long period of dancing at a hounfor, she describes being "mounted" by a loa, Erzulie. She experiences the sense of watching her movements as in a dream, moving from an integrated sense of self to "realize, like a shaft of terror struck though me, that it is no longer myself whom I watch" (DH 259). Deren terms this experience as a sense of self that doubles, which she admits, is only conjured in her text as pure recollection. The experience of her mounting by the loa is rendered in sensual description which encroaches from the skin of the drum to her own skin, moving up the veins of her leg as "a white darkness, its whiteness a glory and its darkness, terror" which prompts her at all costs to keep moving, keep moving (DH 259). The gap between these moments, she states, remains unaccountable, a dead space and time, a terrifying silence: "I am sucked down and exploded upward at once. That is all" (DH 260). As with all experiences of spirit-possession discussed in this paper, immediacy is rendered only in a testimony of belatedness.

Deren's understanding of her memory of this mounting is further rendered in phenomenological terms, recalling the earlier discussion of embodied memory. In taking account of Haitian cosmology and the relationship between the seer and moment of seeing, Deren offers the following phenomenological reflection on her experience in trying to re-capture the chasms of memory itself:

> How could memory reach back beyond the first thing which might be remembered? How could I know a void as void, who had not yet learned substance, or darkness, who did not know light? My memory begins with sound heard distantly, addressed to me, and this I know; this is the sound of light. . . . How clear the world looks in this first total light. How purely form it is, without, for the moment, the shadow of meaning.
> (DH 260-261)

It is clear however that Deren has already ascribed meaning in this passage, given form to her own formless body. Her description, in this sense, arrives too late on the scene of Voudoun. The "reality" of her experience is disqualified by the need to produce a body, to achieve a sense of self-presence and surrender. In attempting to capture the sound of light, she arrives at the precipice of language, the ineffable reach of the rumour; the palpable and penetrating edge of sound and silence. As such, it is clear that something profoundly affected her—something, an encounter with the real, that is all. From the latent confessions of trauma, we turn to an authenticity of pure form, not an embodied form but as a sensual interrogation of silence in and through the rumour's seductive hollow. Deren does not describe a blank in memory, but perhaps the place where silence distils.

Surveillance and Slipping the Rumour: An Embodied Metamorphosis

As we have seen, adherents who pass on the rumour of Voudoun do not conceal or mobilize their bodies as property or possession in order to survive the deprivations of slavery. Rather, it is the curious, invasive or violent outsider who, in encountering the rumour, struggles for re-possession of his or her body. The disjunction between possession and recollection, between time and space flowing through rumour to the limbs of the spirit-possessed, also suggests a departure from what anthropologist Paul Stoller calls an *embodied colonial memory*. The sentient body is indeed consumed by a world but also creates it and his challenge to engage a multisensory analysis of spirit-possession is indeed laudable but, I fear, impossible, at least in the case of Haitian Voudoun. Rather than the transformation of memory and various forms of "knowing" through an embodied practice, I have suggested that the rumour's invocation into the sacred community of Voudoun is rather an *embodied metamorphosis*. As such, Hurston cannot come into *contact* with the social body in and through the rumour of Voudoun. The terms of recognition among Voudoun's adherents are not carried in the body but are rather passed through the body as a "family secret."[7] As such, the shock of recognition in a Hegelian sense, or in the fragmented terms of modernity remains, as it must, with the outsider.

In what follows, I will consider the problem of such shocking recognition in the testimonies of Hurston, Deren, Dunham and W.B. Seabrook—whose book The Magic Island did much to exoticize Voudoun in the Unites States. Together, these encounters with Haitian Voudoun may suggest the difficulty of explaining or interpreting an affective experience or contagion in and through the rumour of Voudoun which is beyond the reach of contemporary linguistic theory. These various encounters do not provide "proof" of an affective communal consciousness carried in Haitian Voudoun but may corroborate the force of contagion passed on in and through the rumour of Voudoun. To varying degrees, we shall see how the rumour's contagion affects these "outsiders" and seems to shatter their sense of self. In contrast, by preserving a "self" which is constitutive of community, the rumour of Voudoun is carried in the bodies of adherents in order to achieve a measure of inviolable permeability as a means of summoning a communal consciousness. Judith Butler suggests that "[f]or inner and outer worlds to remain utterly distinct, the entire surface of the body would have to achieve an impossible impermeability" (Gender 134). Such an impossibility may well be achieved, at least in part, in and through Voudoun's modality of possession. The invasive "outsider" who carries a divergent life-world in their body may be caught in the rumour's contagion which reconstitutes this invasiveness and so is absorbed in Voudoun's pervasive dream-scape. Dunham thus moves seamlessly from foreign girl to native daughter summoned from the mythical homeland of Guinée.

While the borders between the "inner" and "outer" worlds of the Western "subject" are maintained and policed for the purposes of juridical and social control, the rumour summons a communal consciousness. However, for Western observers who emerge from modern capitalist culture, Taussig argues, "the body acquires a dualist phenomenology as both a thing and my being, body and 'soul'" (Nervous 84). Western interlopers such as Hurston are already contagioned by the "disease of social relations" and entry into symbolic orders which may be quite distinct from those encountered in Haiti (Nervous 84). As we have seen in Hurston, she is unwilling to surrender her corporeal body, her property, and thus attempts to kill the rumour. even as she is caught in its contagion.

This experience is consistent with that of Katherine Dunham who also becomes an initiate into the *lavé-tête* or first stage of Voudoun initiation and details her experiences and subsequent visits to Haiti in Island Possessed, published in 1969. Dunham's account is remarkably similar to Hurston's. She too dwells in the mystique of rumour, passing on whispers of the predicted suicide of Henry Christophe, an anglophile autocrat who ruled the northern part of a then-divided Haiti. She is indeed consumed by the phenomenon of rumour as it occurs in Port-au-Prince, where reports of talking fish in nets, or of a celebrated cow who talks in order to spellbind his executioners, sends the capital into a state of "mass hysteria" which she considers a "mass hypnosis." She later understands (and therefore dismisses) these tales as "usual in any animistic society" (Dunham 182).[8] At first disenchanted with "Haitian tall stories" she becomes intrigued by the persistence of storytellers in passing on tales of zombies and sets out to discover a houngan of the Cult Congo Moundong who was reputed to be a cannibal and had seven wives who were transformed into zombies. Like Hurston, her venture is preceded by warnings for her safety. In meeting the infamous cannibalistic priest she ultimately discounts the rumours and chides herself for being drawn into the common gossip of the capital. Her crisis arises, not in verifying the truth of the rumours of Haiti, but in negotiating between her own belief and nonbelief.

This is especially evident during her initiation ritual in which her extensive description of the fasting, dancing and elaborate ritual process is fraught with anxiety over trying to preserve a sense of unitary self and the "splitting" which occured in giving of herself to the possession in marriage to her god Damballa. Her close relationship with Haitian nationalist and later President Dumarais Estimé, a strong opponent of the Voudoun which he believed tied the people to ignorance and diverted them from recognition of immediate problems, may well have influenced Dunham's interpretation (Dunham 26). Yet despite the book's title, it is not the island of Haiti which is in itself magical, but Dunham's own experience of possession by the gods who, she writes, "claim[ed] me for their own, at least for a time" (Dunham 271). Voudoun's modality of possession may be elemental but it

is also fleeting for Dunham.[9] Nevertheless, Voudoun's affective contagion pursues her for life.

Dunham shares with Deren a perplexing relationship to her affective experiences in Haiti. Her paradoxical experience highlights the problem of a dualist phenomenology in her phenomenon of encounter. Her commentary is compelling and deserves to be cited at length:

> It is hard to describe to an uninitiated the process of becoming initiated. Harder still when one remains for years on a fringe border of belief and nonbelief, because the two are so close. A thing happens, you experience it often without seeing it, and it is true. From then on the bitter battle with society begins, whether the thing that happened was acceptable in the society judging it. There must have been, I have since reflected with my jaded observer's mind, drugs of some mild kind administered, incense and herbs burnt that added to the trance feeling that made me see with startling clarity the meaning of this marriage to Damballa, to someone outside the sphere of human acquaintance, the total acceptance without loss of self. Then the sensation would leave me, and instead of feeling the god in possession of me, the calculating scientist would take over . . . This split in attitude I have always found difficult to reconcile in any sort of research into private habits, whether of cult, religious practices, marriage customs, or otherwise. *It is the feeling of being outsider within, or vice versa, as the occasion dictates.* And when people ask me, as they do now, what of those mystic or occult experiences I research, I find myself answering as I did even as far back as those houngfor days, that I honestly do not know. I am there to believe or not believe, but willing to understand and to believe in the sincerity of other people in their beliefs, willing to be shown, to participate, and where the participant begins and the scientist ends, I surely could not say. (Dunham 105-106)

Dunham's re-entry into the domain of the social leaves her unable to experience the depths of her sensory perceptions without interruption. Still, there is the preservation in her text of a feeling of dissolution, of a dramatic encounter with alterity, of a surrender to the unknown in Voudoun's community of the sacred.

Dunham's most famous forebear may well be W.B Seabrook whose book The Magic Island is a passionate, exotic and even spellbinding account of his visit to Haiti that ignited the imagination of American readers. René Menil reviews the book and is struck by Saybrook's depiction of a bond of sympathy between men in Haiti; the all encompassing depths of nature in Haiti; the endowment of passion with the character of reality. Menil writes that "[passion] is as powerful and potent as the fall of a celestial stone or as poison drawn from the hearts of trees. Arrived at a certain point of its violence, it seems to come out of the mind to work in the exterior world and perhaps far-off being, its spell of love and hatred" (Menil 158. 26). Menil's eloquence is borne of an enchantment in his experience of reading Saybrook and the former observes that "[f]rom the depths of nature, human or inhuman, rises a moving force of union and love which communicates to any

object whatever the control over the actions of another" (Menil 159. 27). Menil's encounter through Seabrook's book leads him to locate the origins of such pervasive passion and natural empathy in the mystification of the author himself. That is, Menil tries to regain his own sure footing as reader by re-capturing what he imagines to be the author's awakening from a reason-induced slumber: "Like a man who, in his sleep, does not defend himself against any dream, he stores up the images, complete or broken, builds them into a whole with loving care, without concerning himself with the silly laughter of the civilized man who is awake" (Menil 27).

While at first dwelling in the book's absurdities and divine character—its life in the "shadow of shadows"—Menil's reading of his own experience of possession through the book as "some unknown presence hovering over us" is disrupted (28). He attempts to recover from his own reverie by summarizing "a book whose preposterous tales engulf us in their dreadful machinery. The dead are restored to life by some powerful magician who enforces upon those soulless robots the labours of the living beings" (27). This deferral to the tropes of modernity offers a moment of absolution in the haunting space of alienation and alterity. But Seabrook's own language suggests an affective response to Voudoun's "sprit of place." He thus notes that "[s]omething inside myself awoke and responded it" (Seabrook qtd. in Menil 32). Yet this awakening is dulled by the repetitive urge to re-claim his experience from "the thing itself—their thing" as "rationally defensible" (32). At all costs, Seabrook and Menil must overcome their dispossession in a nation in which citizens have yet to experience a self-awakening. This troubled awakening similarly haunts Hurston as African American.

Well before Hurston arrives in Haiti she is plagued by a trauma which continues to haunt our contemporary moment. Her fragmented experience as a black woman in America, far from the dissolution of a communal consciousness in Voudoun's community of the sacred, suggests the dispossessions of a double consciousness.[10] It is perhaps for this reason that Hurston has been celebrated as an author who engages a poetics of wandering or a masterful aesthetic of disappearance that attempts a retreat from a divided intentionality or any essence of blackness. Francoise Lionnet-Mccumber suggests that Hurston's controversial genealogical enterprise was to preserve an independence from the blind leadership of "Race Solidarity" and to find self-discovery through active self-invention. In reading through Hurston's "thematic solidarities" in her work, she finds that Hurston's method is a "search for familial and maternal connections, for 'mirrors' which can reflect positive aspects of the past instead of being the alienating images of subaltern faces" (Lionnet-Mccumber 250).

Houston A, Baker, Jr. delves beneath these phantasmic mirrors in a phenomenologically informed reading of Mules and Men, and discovers how Hurston employs "the genealogy of the founders of hoodoo" as a *poetics of conjure* to create a sort

of architecture of consciousness in and through her language (Baker 281). This poetics of conjure may perhaps be the liberatory equivalent of our "spirit of space" in and through Voudoun. This genealogical movement, Baker argues, is a classic feature in Afro-American culture of a mode of discourse or performance that he calls "mythomania" (Baker 281-282). The spirit-work of mythomania is to move toward liberation through, not only a *journey to roots*, but also through a kinetic *pharmakon of root work* (Baker 302). Pharmakon is a phenomenon that serves, among other things, as a poison, a medium a technical innovation, a supplement, a gift, and an aid to memory.[11] More simply stated, "mythomania" is in Baker's conception, a term which embodies the carrier of a "double wisdom" who employs multiple strategies so that through an image (in text or performance) s/he carries the "medium of fabrication, innovation and improvisation," through the image's inhabitant to the community (Baker 286). His deference to the Derridean formulation of "pharmakon" notwithstanding, Baker brings us closer to a link with Voudoun's phenomenology of rumour.

My work diverges from Baker's reading in that I am unable to locate a single or embodied source of this medium or *poetics of conjure* . I can only re-trace the moment of affective dissolution in Hurston back in and through the rumour to a conceptual determination of Voudoun's community of the sacred. To be sure, Hurston's dissolution in and through the rumour of Voudoun passes on the spirit of improvisation, or what I term as an unconscious freedom and so summons a very "real" experience of perception. In so doing, she testifies to a surviving communal consciousness passed on in and through the rhythm of Voudoun's rumour; a passing on that does not succumb to a hole in Being but is rather enacts a fold in being.[12] Hurston, too, is enveloped in these sensual folds for a time. Yet given the rumour's contagious force, might this communal consciousness be passed on, might it indeed survive in Hurston's own work? Rather than flee the thrill of embodiment and dissolution we have experienced in and through Tell My Horse, we must remain open to the rumour's seduction. We must turn away from the elusive face of Voudoun and turn again to the pages of Their Eyes Were Watching God.

Notes

[1] Kevin Newmark engages Walter Benjamin's discussion of the disjunction between individual and collective patterns of memory which causes a disruption in one's lived experience. Newmark explains that "modernity would itself be structured like a historical 'accident' that has at some prior moment befallen and disrupted the homogeneous structure of experience." Benjamin is in turn influenced by Freud's insights that "'consciousness arises on the site of, or instead of, a memory trace'" and thus finds a connection between the general structure of experience in contemporary life and the dreams reproduced by accident victims. The formal patterns of continuity are no longer associative elements within the same system of individual and collective identity. The traces of this accident manifest themselves whenever consciousness, as in Freud's understanding, can no longer be made fully compatible with memory which one finds in the study of trauma. Newmark extends this argument and suggests that modernity itself functions as a trauma in which "the thinking subject can no longer be said to be completely in control or conscious of the actual events that necessarily comprise 'his' own past." Please see Kevin Newmark, "Traumatic Poetry: Charles Baudelaire and the Shock of Laughter," Trauma: Explorations in Memory, ed. and intro. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995) 238.

[2] Please see Aimé Césaire, Discourse on Colonialism (New York: Monthly Review, 1972).

[3] This conception may well be summed by Lacan when he writes that "the real supports the phantasy, the phantasy protects the real." Perhaps not surprisingly, Lacan also writes: "The gods belong to the field of the real." Please see Lacan, Four 41-45.

[4] Hurston's literary biographer cites this excerpt from her letter to Henry Allen Moe, Jan. 3, 1937, retrieved from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Files. Please see Robert E. Hemenway, Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography (Urbana: U of Illinois P) 247 and 270, n.5.

[5] Gustatory metaphors, notes Paul Stoller, can also be found among the Songhay people of Mali and Niger who employ such metaphors to fuse body and being. One person eats another (that is, learns/exchanges knowledge) and is in turn eaten by her. Sorcerers do not confront enemies but consume pulverized plants to enhance their powers and so "eat" (overpower) others. These sorcerers eat the *kusu* (food of power) of initiation and in becoming full, enter a network of sorcerous relations in which they are eaten. Please see Stoller, EC 34.

[6] This legacy of forgetting possession is also evident among the Songhay. Stoller notes that in Songhay possession the dancer must not remember the possession and sometimes a medium who abandons his body to a deity may remain unconscious for several minutes. Please see Stoller, EC 22-23.

[7] Alphonso Lingis takes up the propensity of modern epistemology, which includes the work of Judith Butler, to "rigorously distinguish the real appearance of a thing from its perspectival deformations." The contemporary theory of perception, he insists, declares such a project unfeasable, but perhaps it too is doomed from the start for it can only be rumoured, can only exist by hearsay. The rumour of Voudoun is, in this way, already derivative, already a conception in passing—the theoretical equivalent of a forced entry into the sacred community of Voudoun. Nevertheless, rather than engage a subject as constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection as with Butler, Lingis moves to a more palpable, non-western understanding of interiority and in so doing problematizes the very notion of recognition. For Lingis, there is an unbreachable yet unspeakable space of communication in which one does not repeat or exchange as an effect or return to regulatory norms but rather "[s]omething passes between one sensuality accomplice to another. Something was understood; the *password among accomplices* was recognized." In repeating the rumour, one does not touch reality, but instead smells, tastes, intuits and engages an experiential realm by which one elevates, belongs, and participates fully in the inviolable pantheon of the gods; that is, the secret is a summons to the sensual perceptual world of Voudoun's community of the sacred. Please see Alphonso Lingis, The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994) 41-67.

[8] Maya Deren argues that a religion based on the belief that matter is animated by a non-material "spirit" is deemed animistic. Common among such religions are gods of natural elements and spirits awakened in trees, stones and other material objects. However, she argues that "any effort to systematize the Voudoun pantheon in terms of the major elements—earth, air, fire and water—become a Procrustrean operation which amputates such major divinities as Legba, God of the Crossroads, Ghede, God of the Dead, Erzulie, Goddess

of Love" among others. The phenomenon of such taxonomic classification is regularly found among invading cultures who, finding unfamiliar practices and metaphysical beliefs, set out to judge and attribute them as mystical, "primitive" and divorced from reality. Dunham's reductionist conclusions exemplify another means by which she attempts to distance the otherness of her encounter with Voudoun in an attempt to preserve herself from the unconscious threat. Please see Deren's discussion of animism in DH 36, 86-7, 296 n. 1.

[9] It is crucial to note here that despite the obvious similarities of affective response in the encounters of Dunham, Hurston and Deren. There is no singular phenomenon of encounter in and through Voudoun's community of the sacred for the experience is not totalizing nor universal but contingent and unique. It is clear that not all initiates to Voudoun will be possessed by their loa. Moreover, each adherent begins from a point of embodiment that differs according to a complex interweaving of race and gender among other factors. I am grateful to Nicholas Boston for focusing my own concerns about Merleau-Ponty's possible valorization of a primordial self which may not fully problematize or radicalize the particular, racialized and embodied experience of the colonial subject, or as the case may be, the (post)colonial subject or subaltern subject in Haiti. The universal applicability of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological project in a postcolonial discussion of interiority situated in Haiti may indeed be challenged by the rumour of Voudoun which invites a radical rethinking of an embodied metamorphosis which begins before, or indeed may be latent in the landscape, but is also a dynamic and changing force over time. Please see Nicholas Boston, "A Return to Beginnings," Unpublished paper, 1996.

[10] I invoke the term "double-consciousness" from the work of W.E.B Du Bois. Please see W.E.B. Du Bois, The Soul of Black Folk (New York: Dover, 1994).

[11] The term "pharmakon" comes from Jacques Derrida who suggest that the term operates as a controlling metaphor in Plato's Phaedrus.

[12] This formulation is derived from Merleau-Ponty's description of the sentient subject as "a repository stocked with natural powers at which I am the first to be filled with wonder. I am not, therefore, in Hegel's phrase, 'a hole in being', but a hollow, a fold, which has been made and which can be unmade." My use is derivative in that one must be sceptical of Merleau-Ponty's conception of his body as the primordial self proper. Moreover, I suggest the rumour of Voudoun is not in and of itself a seductive hollow or fold in being, but is part of the dramatic enactment of an existential phenomenology in which the self exists and thrives in and through the sacred community of Voudoun. The concept of embodied metamorphosis attempts to address the paradox of Hurston's entry/departure in and through the complex cosmic mirrors of an elemental face of Voudoun which consistently turns away from textual or bodily inscription. Please see Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, 1962 ed. (London: Routledge, 1994) 215.

Conclusion
Sleep Talking : Dreaming from the Body

> Gods always behave like the people who make them. (TH 219)
>
> Never trust biographies. Too many events in a man's life are invisible. Unknown to others as our dreams. And nothing releases the dreamer; not death in the dream, not waking.
> —Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*
>
> If creations are not a possession, it is not only that, like all things, they pass away; it is also that they have almost all their life still before them.
> —Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind"

In entering Voudoun's community of the sacred, Hurston is awakened as both spectator and performer to an embodied metamorphosis, an affective experience of communal participation in perception. Voudoun's poetic, however, summons a dream-landscape which remains far different from that encountered in the mythic homeland of the American dream. If Hurston passes on a surviving consciousness in Tell My Horse, her involution in the sacred community of Voudoun may not survive the return to America. The long shadow of slavery which haunts Hurston's encounter in Haiti and her diasporic writing in the Caribbean, carving an enigmatic path through her self-understanding and self-difference, may also mark a decisive but paradoxical rupture in her experience as African American. In short, the traumatic legacy of slavery and survival *as carried* in and through Voudoun's rumour, may summon a new voice of freedom for Hurston which emerges in Their Eyes Were Watching God. Written over seven weeks while in Haiti, Hurston's most acclaimed novel bears the traces of her encounter with the rumour of Voudoun, casting a long sleeping shadow across her now well honed aesthetic of disappearance. And in carrying the dehumanizing affects of displacement in and through her body, there endures, in Hurston's hallowed silence and disappearance, a being which has yet to awaken.

Tell My Horse

To consider this paradoxical modality of Hurston's survival in the United States, one must return to a place of mythic rememberance occupying two square miles of Manhattan, and hear the call of freedom to which Hurston responds as a leading figure of the Harlem Renaissance. From West Africa to America's South, the legacy of slavery is carried in the black aesthetic tradition of call-and-response but is also constitutive of the search for freedom from racial and sexual oppression pursued during the Harlem Renaissance. If modernism marked an era of institutions and the institutionalized

recognition of race-relations, the Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro Movement did not overthrow existing institutions or invasive discursive regimes but rather sought to identify and perhaps to resurrect a communal consciousness (Watson 16).[1] The project was not populist but self-conscious, a precarious interrelation of intellectual, political and aesthetic pursuits, an excavation of black folk tradition along with the all embracing sweep of Pan-Africanism. But it was also about the pursuit of voice.

Amid the parrying of poetics and protest, the question of representation and recognition of "the New Negro" remains, even today, a subject in crisis and controversy.[2] The Harlem Renaissance could thus be viewed as an explosive mobilization in the call-and-response tradition: a call to participation, to immediacy, to citizenship, to individuality as a liberating act, while also assuming simultaneous membership in the *potential* national community. A community whose potential included freedom from racial segregation, discrimination, legal injustice and invasive, assimilationist policies and practices. A community whose promise would be measured and contested by an elite group of provocative writers, prominent intellectuals, fledgling poets, magnetic performers, jazz aficionados, radical agitators, blues impresarios, and a host of white supporters and patrons—all seeking to participate in and to create enduring change for blacks.

Similarly, as an inheritance from tribal Africa rediscovered during the Harlem Renaissance, the vitality of oral storytelling in the call and response tradition is defined by its participatory nature. In a continuing dialogue, the audience responds to the storyteller's call, each carrying on the word and the endless work of interpretation so that "African oral stories express the flux of social and natural reality in an open form" (Callahan 15). This dialogue suggests the potential of the spoken word to bind listeners and to provoke critical reflection and social transformation. In his study of African Folktales, Roger D. Abrams suggests that the *act* of oral storytelling is not confined to the moment of performance but, as we have seen with the rumour of Voudoun, exerts contagious power over the community beyond the immediate responsive audience of listeners.[3] Likewise, through the contagion of Voudoun's rumour, adherents participate in an unconscious freedom which further summons a surviving communal consciousness in and through the sacred community of Voudoun. This dynamic community thus preserves, among adherents, a measure of inviolable interiority.

The translation of the call and response tradition in the United States however summons a far different address. Henry Louis Gates locates the inheritance of the call and response tradition in the concept of "signifying," which is the "slaves' trope," a trope which subsumes all other rhetorical tropes.[4] However, Gates' concept of master tropes erases the more nuanced and problematic terms of belonging and displacement carried on

the slave ships across the transatlantic. While Gates seeks to encapsulate such an inheritance through a tropological continuity from Africa to America, he fails to consider a modality of possession which may already be constitutive of community. Worse still, the call and response tradition becomes relegated to a linguistic structure of address, rather than a participation in perception, which seems to perform in the absence of a perceptual life-world or "spirit of place." The unbroken metaphysical arc thus becomes bound to a narrow course of metaphysical enclosure.

Gates argues that Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God is a paradigmatic signifying text, given her use of free indirect discourse and the structure of intertextual revision which revises key tropes and rhetorical strategies received from diverse antecedent texts such as Du Bois' The Quest of the Silver Fleece, Toomer's Cane and Douglass' Narrative of the Life ("Blackness" 290). Hurston also employs the rhetorical construct of "double-consciousness" as advanced by Du Bois in her use of direct and indirect discourse (Gates, "Blackness" 317). While the highly sophisticated use of repetition and reversal in signifying may suggest "an implicit parody of a subject's complicity in illusion" there is little sense of perceptual involution here (Gates, "Blackness" 289).[5] The impetus in signifying to achieve a sense of indeterminacy or epistemological uncertainty through such strategies as narrative parody or indirect discourse, may be useful in refusing the figure of blackness as a trope of presence. It may also be an important improvisational modality, not unlike the spirit of improvisation in the rumour of Voudoun as unconscious poetic. However, Gates' analysis is forced into the double dilemma whereby in order to stabilize and render a vital continuity within the African American past, he must give it a visible and "meaningful" order. The conception of signifying by Gates thus describes an aesthetic of disappearance which remains doomed to a poetics of wandering.[6] It is instead to the *affective silence* in the rumour of Voudoun that one must return in order to imagine a surviving communal consciousness carried in the crossing of slaves to America.

Hurston seemed to intuit the weight of Voudoun's *affective silence* in Mules and Men, written in 1935, one year before her Caribbean travels began and three years before Tell My Horse was published. She finds that Haitian Voudoun or "Hoodoo," as practiced in New Orleans, "is burning with a flame in America, with all the intensity of a suppressed religion. It has its thousands of secret adherents" (Hurston, Mules 183). But in preserving the African tradition, Voudoun in America also remains bound to secrecy for "[i]t is not the accepted theology of the Nation and so believers conceal their faith" (Hurston Mules 185). Able to adapt to its locale like Christianity, however, Hurston finds that the vision of voodoo ritualistic orgies popularized by Hollywood are ridiculous for "[t]he profound silence of the initiated remains what it is. Hoodoo is not drum beating and dancing. There

are no moon-worshippers among the Negroes in America" (Hurston Mules 185). When Hurston arrives in Haiti, then, this "silence" may already be carried in her body from America. This complex crossing suggests Voudoun's rumour as modality of possession may already be "known" to Hurston upon her arrival in the Caribbean. Moreover, her understanding of secrecy among Voudoun's adherents can be aligned to Hurston's own aesthetic of disappearance.

Clearly Hurston understands the threat of exposure among Negroes in America, as is evident in her ironic and often patronizing tone with which she discusses the often disembodied testimonial narratives of Frederick Douglass. While Douglass testifies to the indignities of slavery, his vigorous speeches are also an effort in "conscious crafting," a decided effort to produce an unrestrained willful subjectivity which nevertheless incurs suspicion by white audiences (Andrews 24). William Andrews considers Douglass' increasing refusal to accept white conventions in speech as an attempt to turn away from the "novelization of voice," a way to challenge the notion of an "authentic" African-American text (Andrews 33). In searching for an emancipatory voice, Douglass' speeches may well remember the legacy of slavery in the call-and-response tradition but they do not pass it on as a modality of possession.[7] This novelization of voice in early African-American narrative instead may imagine a community that does not allow local proximity and operates in the absence of any notion of interiority or intrasubjectivity. Although this question of community is a subject which would require much further study, one might argue that Douglass' speeches become part of a public discourse which does not pose a fundamental challenge to the foundations of whiteness in the Republic but rather reifies the elemental form of the nation (Warner 63). His address, that is, constructs the value of participation in the individual right of citizenship only metonymically, as the right of private individuals to participate or enter into political or public discourse only by bracketing his particularity and difference.[8] As a "representative" figure of the deprivations and dehumanization of slavery, Douglass is forced to inhabit a negative existence in relation to official embodiments of power. His call to inheritance, while attempting to perform a self-proximate voice— a voice of freedom embodying an undivided intentionality that remains the promise of the unified nation— he may muffle the traumatic memory of displacement and dehumanization.

In writing of Douglass in her introduction to Tell My Horse, Hurston suggests, in a thinly veiled ironic tone, that as Douglass had thought, the negro must be absorbed by the whites in order to survive rather than strive to maintain an equal but seperate identity. She states: "Perhaps we should strike our camps and make use of the *cover of night* and execute a *masterly retreat* under white skins. If that is what must be, then any way at all of getting more whiteness among us is a step in the right direction. I do not pretend to know what is

wise and best" (TH 7; emphasis added).[9] Hurston, of course, "knows" better and her life and art was devoted to a different kind of "knowing," a mastering of the aesthetic of disappearance. The testimonial tradition was not, for her, a summons to the answerlessness of trauma, but rather she sought a response in finding a passage through the fragmentations of double consciousness, a wandering toward a nation unbounded by the haunting figure of blackness. She sought a consciousness committed to a plenitude of experience, one that might lose itself, as in Voudoun's sacred community, in a communal cloak of night. If Voudoun's rumour summons bodies to an affective participation in a non-national community, however, America, as nation, would respond to a far different interpollation. The revolutionary passion for emancipation would seem to be extinguished for African-Americans in a calamitous war of words.

Tell the Night

In 1793 James Wilson claimed that the people *spoke the nation into existence*. For Christopher Looby, this figure of a nation spoken into existence enacted an analogy between the relation of a social group to its past, and the relation of an individual speaker or a linguistic community to the inherited language system that makes its utterance possible (Looby 26). He thus employs the expression "logocracy in America" to describe the origin of the United States as an act of speech and conceives the Revolutionary inception as a linguistic phenomenon. Looby's exposition on the relationship between performativity and rhetoricity in referring to and instituting the nation-state in and through such texts as the Declaration of Independence is certainly not unique.[10] And while a consideration of the revolutionary moment is far beyond the scope of this discussion, Looby's emphasis on the paradox of linguistic belonging may suggest how the call and response tradition—which includes and yet exceeds Hurston's writing—continues both to evade and remain silenced by contemporary linguistic analysis. Rather than pursue such an argument here, I will sketch a brief outline or trajectory of further study which would require more careful analysis.

Looby argues that America's vast ethnic, racial, demographic, and geographic diversity was regulated through the institution of language, the only social institution and inheritance available to the young republic (Looby 82). Yet by locating an authority mediated in words, a crisis of legitimacy occured. America's politics of consensus was performed in language which would also serve to mediate normative dissensus, while fundamental differences always threatened to erupt (Looby 80). The charismatic authority of the spoken word, then, became crucial to instituting authority even after the making of the written Constitution. Writers and anti-slavery proponents such as Ralph Waldo

Emerson and Walt Whitman, especially in ante-bellum America, sought to "liberate" the American mind from the anti-democratic traditions and nostalgia of European authority.[11] According to Looby, they further exemplified how "vocal forms like political oration and sermons created a counterpoint of anxiety about the sufficiency of textuality as a ground of authority, and inspired a widespread enchantment with vocal forms as necessary supplements to if not alternative grounds for authority" (Looby 44). This emphasis on vocal performance was crucial to both deligitimize inherited authority from Britain and to enact a discursive institution of "new" authority.

Douglass, however, is thrown into a historical world in which his orations merely legitimize pre-existing linguistic and intersubjective structures. The call and response tradition or inheritance is effectively erased and grafted onto the event of nationalism. Amid the polyphony of a united nation under one voice, the call and response carried in Douglass may paradoxically silence an emancipatory black consciousness. While the urge to re-route black orators into well wrought speaking communities is experienced by Douglass as a novelization of voice, Hurston, too, is invited to join the chorus. Callahan declares that "Their Eyes Were Watching God is Hurston's novelistic Emancipation Proclamation as, earlier, Mules and Men had been her Declaration of Independence from the conventions of anthropology" (Callahan 117). Such linguistic conventions and circulations, however, do not address Hurston's most significant departures. Her encounter with the rumour of Voudoun is a bodily summons that does not respond to the paradoxical interpollation of individual and community as constitutive of the nation. Rather than haunt the margins of representation in American, Hurston's aesthetic of disappearance in her work, even before her arrival in Haiti, may suggest the traces or outlines of a surviving consciousness which passes through the disseminations of nationalism. In so doing, Hurston's testimony in Their Eyes enacts a freedom that may well slip through the tongue of contemporary linguistic theory.

Tell Zora

Although it remained out of print until the mid 1970s, Hurston's Their Eyes has accumulated an extraordinary wealth of readership and criticism, far exceeding that of Tell My Horse. This poverty of readership may also be because Tell My Horse is often classified as a work of anthropology. During the 1979 MLA convention in San Francisco the most contested aspect of the Their Eyes was as to "whether or not was Janie is able to achieve her voice" (Washington xi).[12] Given the large body of critical writing on the novel, no substantial review of the criticism can be offered here. However, much emphasis has remained on whether Janie is indeed able to preserve a sense of interiority in the face of

the violations of racial and sexual oppression. Janie's journey in the novel is summed by Callahan as a narrative sleight of hand. As narrator, Hurston moves from observer to participant in a narrative form which shifts from first person to third so that "in her third-person way, Hurston changes once more from a witness to a participant in Janie's inner life" (Callahan 138). Elizabeth Meese suggests that Janie/Hurston do not escape phallocentrism but stages a critique from a precarious inside position of logocentrism. In re-telling Janie's story, Hurston draws the temporal horizons of anticipation and retrospection inside the narrative, so as to transform the fleeting presence of an oral tradition "to the more enduring textuality required to outwit time's effect on memory" (Meese 53). Similarly, the use of indirect discourse in the novel is noted by Gates as a strategy of transgression and preservation, a form of signifying in which the relationship between narrator and character, between individual and community, are not identifiable or totalizable. The subject and nature of discourse are thus indistinguishable.

Barbara Johnson takes these readings further, finding no answer in Janie's call to freedom but rather a structure of address in the novel which reveals how "difference and identity are always a function of a specific interlocutionary situation" so that "any attempt to lift out of a text an image or essence of blackness is bound to violate the interlocutionary strategy of its formulation" ("Thresholds" 178). Johnson emphasizes how Janie employs "articulate language," similar to the rhetorical figure of signifying, to preserve difference by maintaining a distinct inside and outside realm of experience through the use of chiasmus. These reversals map out the changing power relationships between Joe Stark and Janie. A violent outburst by Joe toward his wife is a defining moment for Janie; a moment when something "fell off the shelf inside her" (TE 67). When she goes inside to see, her awakening is that "[s]he had an inside and an outside now and suddenly she knew how not to mix them" (TE 68). Johnson argues that "what is at stake in the maintenance of both sides—metaphor and metonomy—inside and outside—is the very possibility of speaking at all" ("Metaphor" 164). In Johnson's analysis, difference is understood in the novel as a suspension of reference rather than Janie's attempt to re-referentialize difference ("Thresholds" 183). This suspension of reference is consistent with what I have loosely termed Hurston's aesthetic of disappearance but what is lifted out of these examples is the sentient, knowing body; the possibility of a surviving consciousness being passed on in and through the phenomenon of encounter. None of these reading, despite their reference to oral traditions, assume a pre-linguistic participation, a measure of immediacy which might circulate outside of narrative or linguistic from. None of these readings posit a phenomenon of encounter or survival that exists before or through the nation. None of these readings of a celebrated novelist, folklorist and anthropologist consider her contact in

Haiti, where the novel was written, and the contagion of Voudoun's rumour to which Hurston is summoned, as a transgressive point of departure which is perhaps already crossed in the novel. A brief gloss of Their Eyes in relation to such concerns may suggest potential avenues for further critical study.

If Hurston's contact with the rumour of Voudoun in Haiti may be said to "originate" in New Orleans with a "knowing" silence or creative apperception which she then carries to the Caribbean, this seductive silence or modality of possession had also already crossed the Middle Passage during the transatlantic slave trade to America. Likewise, Their Eyes inaugurates a paradoxical return to beginnings, much like the pervasive rumour of Voudoun in Haiti, without offering a *necessary point of departure*. The novel opens with a group of porch-front watchers who listen and hear and speak words "walking without masters." Far from disciplinary regimes of discourse or juridical modes of Constitutional authority, these inscrutable watchers "passed nations through their mouths. They sat in judgment" (TE 2). Janie's journey is a sort of poetics of wandering, following a prescribed path from an exterior horizon of experience in which the store front, porch front, big house and courthouse are all metonyms for the constrictions and oppressions of centralized or omnipresent authority over Janie. And it is doubtful as to whether Janie ever escapes such circulations of power.

Nevertheless, Janie's journey toward emancipatory consciousness is a search for an interior realm, a spiritual re-birth of sorts, that will arrive cradled as a newborn but passed on in the arms of hungry witnesses. The novel opens and concludes with a back-porch conversation between Janie and her close friend Pheoby Watson. Upon Janie's return to Eatonville, Pheobe imbibes the story of her friend's journey with a "hungry listening [that] helped Janie to tell her story" but this not a pivotal moment in which a vision of the future is passed on. Pheoby answers Janie's story by stating "Lawd . . . Ah done growed ten feet higher jus' listening tuh you" (TE 82). Despite this eager consumption of time by Pheoby, it must be noted that all around "the night time put on flesh and blackness" (TE 10). This expression resonates with the rumour of Voudoun and the whispers which circulates on a horizon of a dark and brooding imagination of the Haitian peasantry. This is not a journey back home or as Janie puts it "tuh de horizon and back" so that her travels reveal the great revelation that people "got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin' fuh themselves" (TE 182). Janie's journey and her experience instead tumbles through darker recesses in the novel.

Janie succumbs to contradictory impulses in the story so that her grandmother's reproofs, which are borne of the horrors and deprivations of slavery, is passed on as a "crumbling dissolution" in Janie (TE 12).This dissolution is not emancipatory, as in

Hurston's experience at Archahaie which summons her to the sacred community of Voudoun. Rather, this is a profound and crippling sorrow which is registered in black folk who are "branches without roots" (TE 15). This dubious inheritance is something Janie wishes to turn away from and so comments to Pheoby that "Ah done lived Grandma's way, now Ah means tuh live mine" (TE 108). Much like Hurston's chasing of the rumour of Voudoun, however, Janie must confront a divided intentionality. In order to survive the crossing from the community of Eatonville to the city, in order to escape her brooding sorrow and follow along a march of progress, she may be forced to murder her own desire. Her desire for the transcendent bonds of love are quickly extinguished by her first husband Logan Killicks. That desire then is re-rooted and comes strolling along what may be Hurston's metaphoric equivalent of America's road of progress and opportunity, in the stalwart figure of Joe Starks. Starks literally levels the landscape in a plaintive search for the American dream. But Janie's desire to escape the bonds of slavery is sought, not in such soulless roads, but in the seeming transcendence of love. Janie's desire from freedom thus arrives in the almost dream-like figure of Tea Cake.

Janie's transformative experiences seem to begin following her departure from the imprisoning Logan Killicks, when she meets Joe Starks, a man who "spoke for far horizon. He spoke for change and chance" (TE 24). This pivotal figure supplants Legba, god of the crossroads, for he is described upon his death as "[t]he Little Emperor of the cross-roads [who] was leaving Orange County as he had come—with the out-stretched hand of power" (TE 84). The outstretched hands suggests an act of possession and an insatiable desire for consumption which is constitutive of the dream-work advanced in white America. Joe's house mimics the "the big house" during the time of slavery and his house harbours the captive treasures and trinkets as symbols of whiteness. The black folks of the town are left to feel "[l]ike things had been kept from them" (TE 45). This sense of dispossession pulls them away from a modality of possession which, as we have seen in Voudoun, is not commensurate with property or symbolic practice. One of the blacks of Eatonville thus states that seeing Starks, a black man, accumulate such white splendour "was like seeing your sister turn into a 'gator. A familiar strangeness" (TE 45). Janie is soon caught in a negative dialectic between the lies of the store front and the porch front.

While Joe makes every attempt to silence his wife's imagination, the porch-front wakes her up with enlivening songs and stories. Janie's estrangement in the store is alleviated by the exchanges of Sam and Lige whose humorous tales and circumlocutions are intended not at exposition but as an to smoke each other out, an invitation to keep the conversation going. Yet the porch front is not a place of theatre, but extends, like the Voudoun pantheon, beyond the dream-landscape to pervade Janie's unconscious. When he

begins to understand the force of their porch-front lies, Joe sets the porch-front against Janie. He thus criticizes her in front of the assembled audience in an effort to bring any vestige of an interior creative space to a violent surface (TE 74). It is also Janie's violent encounter with Joe which restores to Janie a horizon of imagination which seems unimpeded by her husband's desire for progress. But it is death that ultimately pervades both houses; a death which had "[b]een standing there before there was a where or a when or a then" (TE 80). As her husband's imminent death looms, the townfolks circle the body—not Joe's but Janie's—with their buzzing on the porch-front. They hold court in an interminable fit of waiting while "[r]umour, that wingless bird, had shadowed over the town" (TE 80). Death and rumour may be unconsciously envisioned as inescapable and pervasive in Janie, each alleviating a counterpoint of anxiety about the other. Nevertheless, while the Joe's life ends as finality and darkness. Joe's death does not disturb Janie's newfound freedom. She refuses to succumb to a valley of sorrow on behalf of her husband and thus says "An ain't grievin' so why do Ah haft mourn?" (TE 107).

Tea Cake's arrival in Janie's life is like a dream—one might liken it to the inspiriting presence of a god who, for Janie, could "leap forth and mount to the sky on a wind. That was the beginning of things" (TE 103). Tea Cake becomes an idyllic figure in the novel, a new beginning in Janie's life, but is always staged against the prying eyes of the town. Tea Cake must be smuggled in by the back gate so that the relationship feels like "some great secret she was keeping from the town" (TE 98). The welcome invasive forces of the porch front must now be eluded for *in their eyes* , Janie has become their property. Pheoby understands the sweep of rumour and wanders back to Janie, stopping along porch- fronts in order to subdue the rumours about her friend, so that her firm "intention looked like an accident and she didn't have to give her opinion to folks along the way" (TE 107). Pheoby warns Janie of the town's remonstrations and soon Janie takes another departure to Jacksonville with Tea Cake while the town "bore plenty witnesses" (TE 111). When Tea Cake and Janie descend into the "mud" to begin anew, Janie wonders what if Eatonville could see her now. The porch front thus extends its gaze to an interior perceptual realm in Janie. No matter how far she journeys, it seems, eyes are watching, bearing a prohibitive witness.

There is, of course, the suggestion that an unspeakable primordial sacred language exists in the relationship between Janie and Tea Cake who, she says, "done taught me the maiden language all over" (TE 126). But here too Janie falters. Tea Cake's house, like Joe's "big house" was a magnet the unauthorized center of the "job" (TE 126) but Janie's desire for Tea Cake could not save her from jealousy or the vagaries of fear and desire itself. Even love does not help Janie achieve self-possession. Instead, to relieve his own

fear, Tea Cake finally determines to whip Janie for it "reassured him in possession" (TE 140). He is like Mrs, Turner who hated those more negroid than herself and who had "built an altar to the unattainable," her gods worshipped for dispensing suffering without reason (TE 138). To bow to the altar of whiteness, or progress, or to find homage in blind leadership among blacks is to become caught in a debilitating master/slave dialectic. It is the caprices of gods, the indiscriminate suffering alone that inspires fear which is "the most divine emotion. It is the stones of the altars and the beginning of wisdom," for "[r]eal gods require blood" (TE 138-139). Janie cannot turn away from a violent inheritance, nor the endless mystery of fear and desire, for in order to survive she must pass *through* darkness.

That darkness arrives in the form of a hurricane which, along with the journey to the "mud," assumes mythical proportions in the novel. The hurricane spirits through a natural world which, not unlike the Voudoun god Agwé, is described as "the sea . . .walking the earth with a heavy heal" (TE 153). Those who chose not to escape the storm sit around in Tea Cake's house "stuffing courage into each others's ears," while the hurricane threatens outside (TE 148). Hurston seems to be critical about seeking a redemption which transcends the corporeal world, or in the passing on of false courage, for she writes that the "[t]he time was past for asking the white folks what to look for through that door. Six eyes were questioning God" (TE 151). Following the hurricane, there is a mass of carnage left but not due to natural forces; it is man-made. The pervasive scent of death is imbued by the stolid stench of blind faith among the dead, so that she finds "[t]he dead flung wide open in wonder. Death had found them watching, trying to see beyond seeing" (TE 162). One might describe Janie's journey as mythic, almost incomprehensible, her survival from the snatches of a rabid dog, fantastic.

When Janie enters the courtroom for ostensibly killing Tea Cake who suffered a madness brought on by the dog bite, all the black folk "wanted was a chance to testify" but they are similarly caught in circulations of oppressive power (TE 177). Hurston writes: "The palm tree dance began again among the Negroes in the back. They had come to talk. The State couldn't rest until it heard" (TE 177). Given that America as nation had already awakened, the testimonial function in this scene may suggest a linguistic reiteration which enables the State to rest on juridical and discursive modalities of power. On the stand, Janie is trapped in these circulations of power. Moreover, the Negroes are here posited as indistinguishable from the sway of the State. Janie takes the witness stand thus, not to defend herself against the death of Tea Cake, but to fight "lying thoughts" (TE 178). This is not the "lying" enacted in and through the rumour of Voudoun, a summoning of unconscious freedom in and through a communal consciousness. Janie refuses to render testimony to an existential journey she experiences with Tea Cake that remains

unspeakable. The threat of "lying thoughts" is the domain of conscious life that bifurcates lived experience. Janie's silence is not an unspeakablity of prohibited desire; it is not a silence that demarcates the speakable from the unspeakable as the interpollative cry of citizenship or the policed utterances that circumscribe the social. Janie's silent testimony is a refusal to enter a juridical domain in which African Americans, while suffering from a lack of recognition, still die from over-exposure in discursive regimes and disciplinary mechanisms of the nation-state.

Not surprisingly, then, the novel begins with Janie coming back from "the sudden dead, their eyes flung wide open in judgment" (TE 1). This may well be a death by judgment rendered in the courthouse, or the redemption sought in a horizon outside oneself, in a monotheistic god. These are the ravages of a bloody exposure. But neither is redemption to be found in the passing on of Janie's story to Pheoby. As Janie strives to locate herself on the ever receding horizon of her own experience, the novel comes to a precipitous close. As stated earlier, Janie notes that "Ah done been tuh de horizon and back and now Ah kin set heah in mah house and live by comparisons" (TE 182). Though we are entranced by Hurston's beautiful language as Janie "pulled in her horizon like a great fish-net . . . She called in her soul to come and see" (TE 184), the affect is incomplete for the reader—the horizon still unending. These are the strange contradictions of Janie's coming to consciousness which is constructed as an individual journey in the novel, but one that can never be realized outside a community of witnesses—either from courthouse or porch front. But listen again. Hurston has merely called her reader closer. To come see. We draw our chair nearer and listen. Hurston has summoned us to a place beyond the paths of progress, into a darker valley of torrent and violence, through the blind absolutions of love, below the porous seasons of sorrow, further than the trail of whispers that people the dream-scape of Eatonville. Hurston's language carries us on a journey to an indeterminate place. She pulls in the horizon itself to contagion her readers, to summon them toward an imaginative "spirt of place." We, the readers, need only rise in our bodies and move toward the promise of its communal cloak. We open our bodies to bear witness, and in our dissolution, may carry on the work of dreaming.

Hurston's poetics of wandering in Their Eyes, much like the seductive hollow of the rumour of Voudoun, is contagious. Readers are summoned to the text, to the ineffable reach of Janie's silence in the courthouse and in and through her fantastic but untranslatable journey, may well experience a sense of dissolution. This dropping out may be alluded to by Johnson who finds that in inserting herself into Hurston's structure of address, "[i]t was as though I were asking Zora Neale Hurston for answers to questions I did not even know I was unable to formulate" ("Thresholds" 172). Johnson's silent and unwitting

testimony may not merely signal the problematic structure of address which Hurston employs in order to elude any essence of blackness which might be extracted among a heterogeneous readership. Rather, it is the realm of the "unknown" in Johnson's reading that suggests a passing on in and through Their Eyes, of a domain which exceeds linguistic intelligibility. Perhaps it is not so much that Johnson is cautious not to violate/enter Hurston's structure of address, but rather that she is caught in its contagion, in its domain of inviolability, and is unable to emerge from it. Despite the novel's apparent sense of metaphysical enclosure, Hurston does not answer the call to freedom but instead summons bodies to an experience of immediacy. That summons also exceeds the domain of a textual encounter for such freedom exceeds the pages of the novel to strike out on a path of unbounded but perhaps collaborative creative apperception.

This is perhaps evident in the search by Alice Walker in 1973 for the unmarked grave of Hurston who lies buried in a segregated cemetery of the once all-black town of Eatonville, Florida. The journey, recorded in MS magazine, would resurrect interest in Hurston's work, preserving her writing from decades of obscurity following Hurston's virtual disappearance from literary life in the 1950s. Walker's experience is something of an embodied topophilia—her search engages the perfect convergence of body, spirit and place. In recording her thoughts about the search for Hurston's grave prior to departure, Walker's rememberance of Eatonville is vivid; she writes: "Eatonville has lived for such a long time in my imagination that I can hardly believe it will be found existing in its own right." In pursuing her existential quest, which may also be an experience of unconscious freedom borne in Hurston's writing, Walker assumes the character of Hurston's niece, a lie which she says, "comes with perfect naturalness to my lips" (Walker 74-78). In walking into the lie, she also embodies Hurston's own corporeal engagement of living lies as a modality of possession. The dramatic discovery of the grave is described in a mystical and dream-like descriptive scene. After an exhausting search for the grave, Walker calls out to Hurston in frustration and then "hears" a response so that she suddenly finds herself standing in a sunken rectangle about the size of a grave. This scene, set amid a field of dried grass and bushy trees, may well be suggestive of Walker's return to a "spirit of place." Walker's journey to Eatonville may signal her silent entry into a perceptual world which remains misunderstood in and through Hurston's writing.

While Gates argues that Hurston becomes a "metaphor for the black woman writer's search for tradition," (TH 290) I would claim that it is rather the passing on of a communal consciousness which may be performed in and through the body of Hurston's work—a "body" that remains inseparable from Hurston's encounter in Haiti, even if such contact is marked by temporal lags. Their Eyes does not so much resurrect the dead author

as open up a fold in being—summoning readers to a fading author who slips beyond the tropological play of indirect discourse, or a linguistic aesthetic of disappearance. For Walker, as for readers who remain open to the call, Hurston summons an encounter in Their Eyes that does not posit a surviving consciousness from sleeping to waking, as in the disembodied call of America as imagined community. Rather, Hurston invokes a silent participation in perception of a plenitude of experience by passing on the awakening to others. This then remains the elemental enchantment of an undivided and intentional silence. Writing in the mid-1990s, Joan Dyan notes that a young practioner of Voudoun, now residing in New York, explained: "The loa are in the people not in the place. They follow their *cheval* (horse) anywhere, across the ocean and into their homes'" (Dayan 19). Hurston's poetics of wandering may indeed take a dramatic *departure* following her encounter in Haiti. She lures readers in and through the seductive hollows of Their Eyes, to summon a communal consciousness that may yet survive the crossing after all.

Notes

[1] As with most historical events, it is difficult to trace the "authentic" beginnings of the Harlem Renaissance. It is clear however that the Movement's elite figures emerged from propitious economic and sociological conditions as well as changes in urbanization and emigration following the Great War. Some trace the phenomenon to the celebratory march of the all-black military band who led the victorious soldiers of the 369th Infantry Regiment, known as the Hellfighters, from 5th avenue to the streets of Harlem in 1919. The pageantry would bring enhanced profile to Harlem, leading the way for the successive march of a pre-eminent and talented group of "cultural nationalists" including the towering intellectual leader W.E.B. Du Bois, as well as Langston Hughes, County Cullen, and Zora Neale Hurston to name a few members of the "Talented Tenth." Following a series of economic downturns and the absence of mass or grassroot support, the Harlem Renaissance came to a sputtering end in the dying days of the Great Depression in 1934. Please see David Levering Lewis, When Harlem Was in Vogue (New York: Oxford UP, 1989) xvi; Steven Watson, The Harlem Renaissance: Hub of African-American Culture, 1920-1930 (New York: Pantheon, 1995) 11-19.

[2] Whether the Harlem Renaissance had indeed inaugurated a profound change in consciousness among blacks, or merely succumbed to the assimilationist fervour of institutionalized racial relations, cannot be fully explored here but is a task for ongoing scholarship. Civil rights elder statesman James Waldon Johnson prophesized that "'nothing will do more to change mental attitude and raise the mental attitude and raise his status than a demonstration of intellectual parity by the Negro through his production of literature and art." Please see Johnson qtd. in Lewis xvi. In trademark irony, Hurston named the movement, an alliance of "Nigerati" and "Negrotarians," suggesting the precarious balance of arts and civil rights, of white patronage and the patronizing attempts at absorption by progressive whites and blacks alike. In coining the word "Negrotarians" Hurston may further suggest that the literary, artistic, intellectual and political newcomers could not escape inherited regimes of economic and political power. Contemporary scholar Barbara Johnson argues that "[r]epresenting the Negro race for whites was nevertheless in many ways the program of the Harlem Renaissance" and insists that Hurston's Their Eyes demonstrates her resistance to re-presenting any image or essence of blackness. Johnson, "Thresholds" 173. Certainly there was no singular agenda among black leaders of the Harlem Renaissance; the urge to celebrate black folk history was derided by writer Jean Toomer who noted that "[t]he folk spirit was walking in to die in the modern desert." Please see Watson 45, who cites Toomer in Darwin T. Turner, ed., The Wayward and the Seeking: A Collection of Writings of Jean Toomer (Washington, D.C.: Howard UP, 1980) 123. Toomer's elegy would not have been sung by Hurston, an extraordinary collector of black folklore, but may have merged with W.E.B. Du Bois' prominent work in organizing the second and third Pan African Congresses, held in 1919 and 1924 respectively, which sought to expand the reach and breadth of democracy following the Great War. Similarly, the disdain for the Negrotarians by Hurston was shared by a decidedly unsympathetic Wallace Thurman. The event of the Harlem Renaissance then, like the legacy of slavery itself, continues to stalk history.

[3] Callahan refers to the research of Roger D. Abrahams, African Folktales: Selected and Retold by Roger D. Abrahams (New York: Pantheon, 1983) 1-19.

[4] One might be tempted to allign the rumour of Voudoun to the African American mythic discourse known as "signifying" and its most archetypical signifier, the Signifying Monkey. For Henry Louis Gates, Jr., signifying is a master trope that subsumes other tropes including metaphor, metonomy and irony, as well as aporia, cathachresis and chiasmus. In America, the black rhetorical tropes subsumed under signifying would encompass "'loud-talking', 'specifying', 'testifying', calling out' (of one's name), 'sounding', [and] 'rapping'" among others. While Henry Louis Gates calls signifying the "slave's trope," the rumour of Voudoun, while certainly including its share of trickster figures, is not merely a language of obscurity or indirect discourse. Henry Louis Gates suggests that the Signifying Monkey is the archetypal signifier of black mythology belonging to the ancestral order of Papa Legba in Haiti, as part of an "unbroken arc of metaphysical suppositions and patterns of figuration shared through space and time among black cultures in West Africa, South America, The Caribbean and the United States." See Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The blackness of blackness: a critique of the sign and the Signifying Monkey," Black Culture and Literary Theory, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Methuen, 1984) 286. Gates cites Geneva Smitherman who traces these and other black tropes in several black texts; please see Geneva Smitherman, Talkin' and

Testifyin': The Language of Black America (Boston, MA: Houghton, 1977) 101-66. Voudoun, however, is not a ritual of signification, nor is it reducible to symbolic codes. To consider Papa Legba (keeper of the crossroads), for example, as the god or medium through which interpretation or meaning is passed on or processed, similar to Hermes in Western discourse, is to equate possession with embodiment. It is to place the gods of Voudoun as characters or vehicles of narration in a master narrative which would subsume myth to history. It is to find a locus of knowledge, a discrete memory, instead of a resistant structure of consciousness.

[5]As with the previous discussion of repetition and the rhythm of rumour, the complex relationship between representation, mimesis and the modalities of re-representation deserves further attention but is beyond the scope of discussion here. For an interesting analysis of repetition which circulates as a figure of black culture in ritual and the rhythm of performance, positioned in contrast to Hegel's notion of "progressive" culture based on accumulation and growth, please see James A. Snead, "Repetition As a Figure of Black Culture," Black Culture and Literary Theory. ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Methuen, 1984) 59-79.

[6] The problem in black literary criticism of finding a way to articulate and analyze the relationship between poetics and politics is profound and remains unresolved. Kimberley Bentson argues that the problem for black literary criticism and of African-American exegitical practices was fueled by black aestheticians in the 1960's who attempted to "weld intellectual discourse to social analysis so as to forge a 'new' analytical poetic." Kimberley W. Bentson, "Facing Tradition: Revisionary Scenes in African American Literature." PMLA 105 (1990): 98-109. Yet, decades earlier, Hurston was highly criticized for failing to write in the protest tradition and her search for voice sharply diverged from the loud declamations against racial oppression by Richard Wright among other male contemporary writers during the Harlem Renaissance. The urge to resolve such a rhetoric of division may also be performed in the call-and-response tradition, a repetition which seeks to recover the rupture between poetics and politics—the promise of a communal consciousness—repeated in Voudoun's rumour and summoned in the sacred community of Voudoun.

[7] The legacy of disavowal and disdain for Voudoun among Haitian leaders finds many counterparts in America. There is, it would seem, a deep seated fear and desire at play in the passionate investments of the of slave songs and the legacy of orality which, perhaps, signals a rupture from its moorings in Africa and the Carribean. Writing of Easton in Talbot county, Maryland, Frederick Douglass provides an eloquent, if uncertain, celebration of slave songs which he also turns away from in the course of his release from the shackles of slavery. His words resonate deeply in the emancipatory narrative and deserve to be quoted at length:

> The slaves selected to go to the Great House Farm, for the monthly allowance for themselves and their fellow-slaves, were peculiarly enthusiastic. While on their way, they would make the dense old woods, for miles around reverberate with their wild songs, revealing at once the highest joy and the deepest sadness. . . The thought that came up, came out—if not in the word, in the sound;—and as frequently in the one as in the other . . . Into all of their songs they would manage to weave something of the Great House Farm. . . . . .
>
> I have sometimes thought that the mere hearing of those songs would do more to impress some minds with the horrible character of slavery, than the reading of whole volumes of philosophy on the subject could do.
>
> I did not, when a slave, understand the deep meaning of those rude and apparently incoherent songs. I was myself within the circle; so that I neither saw nor heard as those without might see and hear. They told a tale of woe which was then altogether beyond my feeble comprehension; they were tones loud, loud and deep; they breathed the prayer and complaint of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish. Every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains. The hearing of those wild notes always depressed my spirit, and filled me with ineffable sadness. I have frequently found myself in tears while hearing them. The mere recurrence to those songs, even now, afflicts me; and while I am writing these lines, and expression of feeling has already found its way down my cheek. . . . If any one wishes to be impressed with the soul-killing effects of slavery, let him go to Colonel Lloyd's plantation, and, on allowance-day, place himself in the deep pine woods, and there let him, in silence, analyze the sounds that shall pass through the chambers of his soul, —and if he is not thus impressed, it will only be because 'there is no flesh in his obdurate heart'" (1944-1945). Please see Frederick Douglass, Narrative of

the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself, 1845, The Norton Anthology of American Literature, 4th ed. vol 1. (New York: Norton, 1994) 1932-1995.

[8] The following excerpt from Douglass reveals the strong impulse toward assimilation in assuming participatory membership under one nation: "We are fighting for something incomparably better than the old Union. We are fighting for unity; unity of idea, unity of sentiment, unity of object, unity of institutions, in which there shall be no North, no South, no East, no West, no South, no white, but a solidarity of the nation." Frederick Douglass, Life and Times of Frederick Douglass Written by Himself: His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape form Bondage, and his Complete History (New York: Bonanza, 1962); Douglass is cited in Dick Russell, Black Genius and the American Experience (New York: Carroh and Graf, 1998) 247.

[9] Langston Hughes sums up the problem of such a spurious oral inheritance this way: "I began to think back to Nat Turner, Harried Tubman, Sojourner Truth, John Brown, Fred Douglass—folks who left no buildings behind them—only winds of words fanning the bright flame of the spirit down the dark lanes of time." Hughes is cited in Houston A. Baker, Jr., "Workings of the Spirit: Conjure and the Space of Black Women's Creativity," Zora Neale Hurston: Critical Perspective Past and Present ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and K.A. Appiah (New York: Amistad P, 1993) 305-306.

[10] See for example Jacques Derrida, "Declarations of Independence," New Political Science 15 (1986): 10.

[11] This is not to say that the oral forms of Walt Whitman, for example, remain outside of the call-and-response tradition. Whitman's "Song of Myself," for examples, may well solicit a call for sensual participation, summoning readers to a communal response. His work thus bears the traces of the black aesthetic tradition. Whitman's call to freedom in this song of America, however, imagines a communal consciousness that attempts to transcend difference rather than in preserving it.

[12] Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God, scr. ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., (New York: Harper, 1990); hereafter referred to as TE.

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