

The Haitian history: from slavery to emancipation?

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Erol Josué – the Voodooos as the servants of the spirit

- Specificity of these cultural productions (talking to the dead / relation to the ancestors/ afterlife)
- Syncretism between tradition religions of West Africa and Catholicism (initiatory rites)
- Linked to Haitian identity from the sixteenth century until today
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYCWd2B2Gkk> (Erol Josué)



The specificity of Haitian culture, the “pearl of the Antilles” (Boyce, 2013: 160)

- “One instantly thinks, then, of one reading of the Caribbean as small island spaces that nevertheless radiate outward. Newer readings of space as infinitely expanding are also applicable” (Boyce, 2013: 159).
- #Task 1 How do you interpret this quote?

Declaration of Independence of Haiti, 1804

- "The Commander in Chief to the People of Haiti Citizens: It is not enough to have expelled the barbarians who have bloodied our land for two centuries: it is not enough to have restrained those ever-evolving factions that one after another mocked the specter of liberty that France dangled before you. We must, with one last act of national authority, forever assure the empire of liberty in the country of our birth; we must take any hope of re-enslaving us away from the inhuman government that for so long kept us in the most humiliating torpor. In the end we must live independent or die".

The Declaration of Independence of Haiti

- #Task 2 Comment the formulations of the Declaration: how can you relate it to the problematic of power relations in the Caribbean?

The first Black Republic in the world

- 1492 Colombus – Presence of Indigenous populations (Tainos)
- 1791-1803, the Haitian Revolution with **Toussaint Louverture** applying the principles of the Enlightenment (Meehan, 2006). Bonaparte's army was defeated by Jean-Louis Dessalines who declared Haiti as the first independent nation of Latin America and the Caribbean. The first Black Republic in the world. First Presidents of Haiti Republic were former slaves
- 1820: Reunion of the North and South of Haiti (Henri Christophe was the king of the north of Haiti)
- 1844: Independency of the Dominican Republic

The legacy of Toussaint Louverture

- "In this inert town, this desolate throng under the sun, not connected with anything that is expressed, asserted, released in broad earth day-light, its own. Not with Josephine, Empress of the French, dreaming way up there above the nigger scum. Nor with the liberator fixed in his whitewashed stone liberation" (Césaire, 2013: 5).
- #Task 3 Comment the quote from Césaire's book (*Notebook of a return to the Native land*)

Toussaint Louverture (1743-1803)

- https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ois_Toussaint_L%27Ouverture#/media/Fil:Toussaint_L'Ouverture.jpg
- "The Haitian Revolution remains the only one in which enslaved people permanently wrested state power from their enslavers" (Martin, 2016: 166).
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBdlwuEoCCU> (Documentary of 2009 on the life of Toussaint Louverture)
- 18th century: Saint-Domingue, the sugar capital of the world (plantation system)
- Petition of 1791 asking citizen rights for Haitian people

The experience of dictatorship and corruption

- Haiti was under the French rule between 1625 and 1804
- The Citadel Laferrière (Citadel Henri Christophe), fortress of the 19th century in the northern part of Haiti. Resistance to the invasions
- The Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo used the anti-Haitian feeling as a nationalistic tool in the 1930s. Parsley massacre in October 1937, massacres of Haitians living in the Dominican Republic
- Duvalier dynasty (1957-1986): dictatorship, corruption and control

The experience of dictatorship and corruption

- François Duvalier known as Papa Doc. Private militia known as *Tontons Macoutes* (massacres of the political opposition). 1964, Duvalier is President for life, cult of personality (manipulation of vodou tradition), close cooperation with USA (choice of anticommunism).
- François Duvalier was engaged in the movement of *négritude*, his son welcomed Léopold Sédar Senghor, President of Senegal in 1976.
- A specific engagement for culture and francophonie.

The experience of dictatorship and corruption

- 1971, François Duvalier died and was replaced by his son, Jean-Claude Duvalier ("Baby Doc"). Investments in tourism but growing protests, JC Duvalier had to flee to France in 1986.
- Aristide's era (1990-2004), resistance against State coups. Natural disasters (Hurricane Gordon 1994). Liberalization of the economy but growing corruption

Hurricanes, earthquakes and turbulent times

- Earthquake of 2010 (See "Désastre" of Frankétienne)
- Destruction of the Haitian National Palace in 2010 due to the earthquake (around 300.000 people who died and more than 1.5 million people were homeless)
- Cholera outbreak in the Artibonite region (10.000 died...)



#Task4 – *Désastre* (Frankétienne) – 12 January 2010

- Describe the painting of Frankétienne. What is the main move of the painting?



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The Spiralist movement

- Jean-Claude Fignolé (1941-2017)
- René Philoctète (1932-1995)
- Franck Étienne d'Argent known as Frankétienne (1936-) who writes poetry
- Spiralist movement: emancipation from the European aesthetical canons (Glover, 2011: 22)
- Strong resistance to the recuperation of the movement in the Francophone literature

The Spiralist movement

- Unlike the movement of *négritude* in the 1930s created by René Maran, Léopold Sédar-Senghor and Aimé Césaire (pride of Black men and women that have to affirm a new humanism) developed in the Antilles, the Spiralist movement escapes any preconceived definition. Not the same posterity as the movement in the creolization in the 1990s (Patrick Chamoiseau, Édouard Glissant)
- Underrecognition of this movement. Marginalization of the movement in the Francophone literary movement

The Spiralist movement and the Afro-Caribbean identity

- Frankétienne, *Mûr à crever*, *Les Affres d'un Défi*
- Presence of characters who are like zombies
- Schizophrenic relations of characters that reflect a complexity of social constructions (Indigenist, Negritude, Antillanist and Creolist rhetoric, Glover, 2011: 32).
- New World postcolonial reality (Non-conformist poetry which is the spirit of Spiralism), pluralism of narrative entities. Frankétienne's *Mûr à crever* is enrooted in the popular tradition of Haiti. The spirale: no linearity, the turbulence of life (Spiralic tales)

The Spiralist movement

- "According to Haitian vodou mythology, the zombie is a being without essence – lobotomized, depersonalized, and reduced through black magic to a state of absolute impotence" (Glover, 2011: 59). Mimetism of the immobility of death. In Frankétienne's work (*Mûr à crever*), mixture of poetry and novel.
- *Les Affres d'un défi*, zombified individuals. Zombification of bodies
- Jean-Claude Fignolé, *Aube tranquille*
- René Philoctète, *Le Peuple des terres mêlées*

#Task5

- How are power relations in Haiti reflected in the aesthetical canons of the Spiralist movement? Use the books of Glover and Boyce to exemplify your answers

“Spiralic nature of history in the New World” (Glover, 2011: 144)

- The massacres of Trujillo: a reminiscence of earlier colonial massacres
- Postcolonialism is reflected in this spiralic narrative (borders disappear and are reconfigured). Role of border regions
- Spiralism tends to replace dialectics here. Symbolic struggle to impose an architecture and a style (the role of the Citadel)
- Spiralism: ways of resisting the violence of colonialism. (Chaos and brutality). René Philoctète, *Le Peuple des terres mêlées* (1989)

Conclusion: systematic destruction of a specific nation

- Spiralism: way of resisting the imperial powers throughout the history (Boyce, 2013: 160).
- Revival of the diaspora. The Earthquake of 2010 reminded Africa of its haitian roots (Boyce, 2013: 162).
- Boyce insists more on Haiti as a symbol for the *négritude* movement.
- Boyce connects to the ideas of Fanon on the self-alienation and the tragic experience of the first Black Republic of the world.
- Haiti: example and historical reference for the emancipation of Black consciousness

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