

Zombie Nation? The Horde, Social Uprisings, and National Narratives

Lucy Swanson

University of Pennsylvania

“Mon pays natal ne serait-il pas un zombi collectif?”
René Depestre, *Hadriana dans tous mes rêves*

“Le seul mythe moderne, c'est celui des zombis –
schizos mortifiés, bons pour le travail, ramenés à la raison.”
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *L'anti-Œdipe*

Abstract: This article explores the function of the zombie horde as a literary entity used to represent and interrogate Haitian national narratives. Three works serve as case studies: Gérard Etienne's *Le nègre crucifié* (1974) to examine the “predatory horde”; Frankétienne's *Les affres d'un défi* (1979) to analyze the “proletarian horde”; and Dany Laferrière's *Pays sans chapeau* (1996) to explore the “phantasmal horde.” Ultimately, the figure of the zombie marks these literary uprisings as mythic discourses, revealing both their pertinence to historical “reality” and their representational limits.

Keywords: zombie, multitude, horde, Haiti, nation, uprising

Introduction: Conceptualizing the Horde

A striking scene from a 2009 French zombie film entitled *La horde* exemplifies the chaos most often associated with the zombie horde. The recently bitten (read: soon-to-be undead) Ouess tells his companions to escape without him from the parking garage that will be overrun shortly by zombies. The scene crosscuts between medium and long shots of the advancing horde, and close-

ups of Ouess standing defiantly in anticipation of the onslaught, until the flood of flailing, ravenous ghouls finally collides with the police officer. Ouess fights off several zombies before perching on the hood of a car. Although his demise is imminent, he makes ample use of his guns and machete, getting in several direct shots to the head and chopping off extremities. The zombies gather around Ouess and handily outnumber him, but they are driven only by instinct, unable to coordinate their attack to take down their solitary prey. Eventually, though, a long shot shows, as Ouess falls, the sea of undead hands slowly covering him until they fill the frame.

In *La horde*, as in nearly every zombie film since Romero's seminal *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), the monster always travels with more of its kind. However, while they may travel as a pack seeking living flesh, they do not appear to work together, or have any thoughts (which are of course signs of life) beyond their next meal. If this French film set in a gritty urban environment evokes the recent uprisings in the *banlieue*, it suggests these are a sign of spreading social chaos, rather than carefully orchestrated demonstrations. And yet, not all hordes are created equal: the undead multitudes occasionally have a very different impetus and take another form entirely. Romero's fourth "living dead" film, *Land of the Dead* (2005) depicts a zombie revolt against those who keep them literally enchained. Dressed as former mechanics, butchers, or softball players, they all make use of their specialized skills and, in this way, represent the power of discrete entities to work in unison. These blue-collar occupations conjure up the issue of class politics; the racially diverse nature of the horde, led by the African-American character Big Daddy, evokes the civil rights marches that rocked the United States during the 1960s. Furthermore, their directional, purposeful movement takes the shape of a single-file line. This formation is in stark contrast to *La horde*, where a chaotic swarm surrounds the lone police officer Ouess. Romero's living dead exceed their basest instincts—to consume human flesh—to follow a less immediate goal, freedom from persecution.

The zombie created by Romero in *Night of the Living Dead* (1968)—often deemed “cannibal,” despite its dubious likeness to the human—has long been deployed as a symbol of widespread ontological transformation. This character has been used by directors as a means of interrogating everything from the Civil Rights movement (Romero’s seminal *Night*) to the alienation symptomatic of the postmodern, urban environment (the light-hearted but surprisingly incisive *Shaun of the Dead*). The conception of the living dead popularized in these films is undoubtedly, now, the most well known around the world. However, centuries earlier, the zombie emerged in a very different form in the folklore of the French-speaking Caribbean. Despite similarities with Romero’s altered vision, including the vacant stare and often-stiff walk, the Antillean monster is a different beast. In Haiti, it is most often figured as a soulless corpse, killed and reanimated by a sorcerer to whom it becomes submissive. In short, this avatar of the monster is a symbol for the slave. Unlike Romero’s zombies, it is primarily docile and only violent if commanded by its master. It does not consume human flesh and is not contagious; instead, its alimentary regime is marked by a lack of salt, which causes the creature to emerge from its catatonic state. Although distinctly different from its “cannibal” cousin, this enslaved, reanimated corpse is deployed in its collective form by Haitian authors as an allegory either of stasis or change within the national setting. As such, the zombie remains symbolically evocative of slavery while simultaneously serving as an emblem of contemporary societal problems. This is particularly true of Haiti’s literary production in the wake of François Duvalier’s dictatorship (1956-71).

Despite the many differences between the hordes of Romero and his successors, and depictions of the Haitian figure, the monster’s *apparent* mindlessness is common ground. Perhaps this quality is also the reason why the creature has been as fruitful for Haitian authors writing about collective uprisings as it has been for North American film directors. It might seem that, given the zombie’s lack of will and consciousness, dezombification would be the only way for an uprising of

the sort found in *Land of the Dead* to take place (although Big Daddy and his posse slowly recover their mental faculties without undergoing an ontological shift). Indeed, in *Bonjour et adieu à la négritude*, René Depestre equates zombification with the physical subjugation of the slave or the mental oppression of the colonized subject, and dezombification with *marronage* or resistance. Against the idea of the solitary *esclave marron*, Depestre insists on its collective dimension, declaring it explicitly “un effort collectif et individuel de connaissance et de saisie de soi” (10). Frantz Fanon similarly evokes the struggle of decolonization. In *Les damnés de la terre*, Fanon famously writes that “[l]a mobilisation des masses, quand elle se réalise à l’occasion de la guerre de libération, introduit dans chaque conscience la notion de cause commune, d’histoire collective” (66). For Depestre and Fanon, the transformation is both collective and individual, physical yet overwhelmingly psychological. Surprisingly, as I will explore later, not all literary uprisings of zombie hordes are prompted by such awakenings.

The development of a collective consciousness is significant because it serves as a boundary separating the masses of *La horde* from the cooperative revolutionary group in *Land of the Dead*. The two distinct types of hordes described above are delineated in Marxist scholars Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire*. In their exploration of the potential liberation from what they describe as a new global order, a form of imperialism without national borders, Hardt and Negri posit the “people” against the “multitude.” The “people” acts in certain ways, like the indistinguishable mass trying to take down Ouess in *La horde*, since it “tends toward identity and homogeneity internally” (103). Although the zombies act individually, their movements are the same, and they are undifferentiated as individual entities. The “people” also “posit[s] its difference from and exclud[es] what remains outside of it,” whereas Ouess is literally consumed by the horde, his difference annihilated as he either dies for good, or comes back as one of the many (103). On the other hand, the “multitude is a multiplicity, a plane of singularities, an open set of relations, which is not

homogeneous or identical with itself” (103). The individuation, and shared goal, of the masses led by Big Daddy in *Land of the Dead* means that they coincide in this way with the concept of the “multitude.” However, while the multitude is an “inconclusive constituent relation,” Romero’s horde is in direct conflict with its oppressors. The zombie horde found in recent Antillean fiction takes on these shapes and others.

Scholars have glossed the zombie’s thematic or theoretical relationship to Haitian literary production. Joseph Ferdinand suggests that *Le nègre crucifié* is part of a “new political statement in Haitian fiction,” found in novels in which “[t]he campaign of *zombification* unleashed by the *tonton macoute* power produces in the victim the need to dezombify himself” (129). Rachel Douglas has noted the proliferation of zombies at the textual level in her study of Frankétienne’s *Les affres d’un défi* and his Haitian Creole versions of the work, *Dézafi* (1974) and *Dezafi* (2002). However, the particular constitution of the zombie horde formation found in Haitian novels begs a close examination. Taking three novels as case studies, I will explore these questions in order to unpack the political and social fears behind representations of the multitudes.¹ First, focusing on the predatory horde in Gérard Etienne’s *Le nègre crucifié* (1974), I will analyze the centrifugal force of the mob—that is to say, the outward movement by which the undead consume the flesh of the living and come to subsume other ontological groups, reducing alterity in its wake as it transforms “us” into “them.” Kaiama Glover notes that, “effectively subjugated but smoldering with the potential for rebellion, the zombie personifies the state of centrifugal-centripetal tension that characterizes the spiral” (60-1). Although my approach is informed by Glover’s study of the zombie considered individually, I am concerned with how zombies function on a collective scale. Considered collectively, even though they do not literally attempt to ingest the cerebral matter of their countrymen, zombies represent the

¹ The works in this article are not the sole representations of the zombie horde in recent French-language Caribbean literature (other examples include Romulus Pierre’s 1978 novel *Les zombis en furie*, and Jean-Claude Figiolé’s 1990 *Aube tranquille*). However, the three works I study here are unique in their concern with the horde’s constitution and adaptation to the socio-political context of Duvalier-era Haiti and its aftermath.

mental consumption of the masses as they are incorporated into the swarms of the walking dead. In my second section, “The Proletarian Horde: Frankétienne’s *Les affres d’un défi* (1979),” I undertake a close examination of how the *de*-zombified horde reconstitutes itself as a collective that, reminiscent of the Deleuzian concept of the rhizome, nevertheless remains heterogeneous, maintaining the existence of singularities. My third and final section, “The Phantasmal Horde: Dany Laferrière’s *Pays sans chapeau* (1996),” revolves around the opposing yet entangled national myths that create and define the legions of the dead. I argue that Laferrière pays particular attention to the horde as a fictional creation—in other words, as literal multitude and in terms of an exponential proliferation of the zombie trope.

The Predatory Horde: *Le nègre crucifié* (1974)

Gérard Etienne’s 1974 work *Le nègre crucifié* defies classification. Subtitled “récit,” this semi-autobiographical account is made by a narrator apparently suffering from a split consciousness. The threat of torture and death at the hands of the zombie masses terrorizing Port-au-Prince hangs menacingly over the narrator and his double, referred to as “mon personnage” throughout the work. The title’s allusion to the crucifixion of Christ runs throughout the work and culminates in the narrator’s death in the final scene where he becomes the scapegoat for all of Haitian society. The internal conflict that appears between the narrator and his double is thus mirrored by the greater struggle at play within the nation. Although the zombies of Etienne’s novel are not the “cannibal” ghouls of *Night of the Living Dead*, they figuratively consume all that they come into contact with, leaving death in their wake, in this way symbolizing power without bounds and the widespread destruction of life caused by the Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti. The prevalence of semantic slippage involving the liminal ontological state between life and death—reminiscent of Jacques Derrida’s concept of *hauntology*, a pun on *ontology* and *haunting* that seeks to politicize the spectral—calls into question the ability of any individual dwelling in an authoritarian state to be fully alive (198).

Although several scholars have made note of the fundamental theme of zombification in Etienne's work, it deserves the type of close reading that I propose to undertake here.² I will begin by analyzing the limits of the horde in relation to the (ostensibly) living multitudes—at times it expands to include all levels of society, while at others it represents the boundary between the citizens and the dictator. The second section focuses on the interplay between the individual and the collective. The latter organizes itself around the former in differing ways, as illustrated by the contrasting examples of the zombie horde and the revolutionary horde. In the final section I devote to Etienne's novel, I will turn to the strange conflation of the two collectives, revealing a surprising proximity between the forces of change and those of stagnation. In the end, the zombie horde reveals its predatory, all-consuming nature.

The ontological borders fluctuate constantly in the shifting socio-political landscape of *Le nègre crucifié*. The narrator states that “[p]armi ces zombis, tout le monde est là” (90). The ranks of the living dead have thus become all-inclusive. Previously disparate groups are conflated under the new world order, as “filles de bonne famille” fill the role generally reserved for “bouzins,” or prostitutes, resulting in the collapse of the nation's socio-economic hierarchy that has often correlated race with wealth and status. However, this new world order is far from a positively-inflected, egalitarian society: individuals are bound together by their hopelessness and necrotic state. At one point the narrator claims, “C'est un monde de zombis autour de moi” (77); the boundary hinted at by the juxtaposition of “moi” and “un monde de zombis” is redefined later in the work when the narrator states that: “Chaque zombi du Chef demande un prisonnier à tuer. Les zombis du Chef savent qu'il y a une barrière entre le nègre et l'homme” (90). On the one hand, his account infuses the figure with an atypical drive (albeit the destructive death drive or *thanatos* that the zombie arguably incarnates) and appears to draw a distinct line between the masses of the living and the dead, the

² See Blandine Stefanson and Belinda Jack.

latter wishing for the annihilation of the former. On the other hand, the fulfillment of the zombies' murderous desire would paradoxically entail the ontological conflation of the two disparate groups, as the prisoners would join their killers in death. The reference to "le même décor où se ressemblent et s'assemblent des zombis," which echoes the adage "Qui se ressemble s'assemble," further emphasizes the idea that, as a group, the zombies are a homogeneous collective (113).

A similar tension between separation and conflation occurs in the culminating scene of the narrative. The bloody climax is presented in three stages: the first stage describes the President's legions; in the second, a revolutionary critical mass organizes around the narrator's double, transforming from a disorganized crowd into a revolutionary body in order to confront the zombie army; the third stage depicts the battle between the two groups and the subsequent dispersal of the revolutionary group. Globally, the passage illustrates two major issues, namely the interplay between the One (the President or "mon personnage") and the Many (the zombies or the revolutionary masses), and the simultaneous conflation and contrasting of the two hordes.³ The first paragraph details the reliance of the President on his undead minions: "Le Chef a peur. Justement, on vient d'exécuter le Président de la Corilla. Pour des crimes envers la Patrie. Ceci redouble la peur du Chef. Vingt mille zombis l'entourent. Même si on tire une balle, elle ne peut pas l'atteindre. Les zombis sont là pour manger la balle" (119). This initial paragraph of the scene establishes the intimate connection between the President and his throngs. The multitudes initially seem to form a force field around him, as the "[v]ingt mille zombis [qui] l'entourent" are invisible yet powerful. In this way, they act as a barrier between their master and the crowds that threaten his power.

Two paragraphs later, the narrator offers a slightly different take on the relationship, suggesting the horde is not merely a brute physical presence; rather, "[c]es zombis sont vraiment des morts que le Président fait revenir à la vie. Lui seul peut les voir et leur parler." The President here

³ I am borrowing Shawn McIntosh's terms to describe various fearful reactions to zombification.

appears not only as the physical center of the horde, but also as its nerve center, since he is the only one capable of communication with the zombies—by extension, he is the one controlling them, the single entity around which the swarm is organized. In “Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d’État,” Louis Althusser evokes a similar dynamic when he writes, “Nous constatons que la structure de toute idéologie, interpellant les individus en sujets au nom d’un Sujet Unique et Absolu est *spéculaire*, c’est-à-dire en miroir, et *doublement* spéculaire : ce redoublement spéculaire est constitutif de l’idéologie et assure son fonctionnement” (132). This specularity seems to be at work in *Le nègre crucifié* as well where the undead reflect the ideology of the dictator. Paradoxically, this transformation into subject entails, in the case of zombies, the annihilation of markers of subjectivity such as consciousness and desires. Indeed, the president’s will becomes that of the zombies, as he sends them to undo the “foule de poitrinaires qui sont en rébellion” (119). The zombies also fulfill the role of repressive state apparatus (police force, army, militia). Thus, while Kaiama Glover rightly asserts that “the zombie in Haiti is a victim—deserving of pity more than fear,” Etienne’s zombies are striking in that they embody the role of predator in addition to that of prey (59).

The revolutionary crowd is, much like the zombie horde, organized around a singular figure: “mon personnage,” the narrator’s double. The battle scene describes how, inspired by an old revolutionary from the Occupation, he manages to assemble a critical mass by blowing up a stick of dynamite in front of the Presidential palace: “la foule croit à un miracle: on vient de faire du désordre devant le palais du Président de la République d’Haïti” (119). It is his literally explosive action that serves as a catalyzing agent around which the revolutionary forces assemble: “la foule croit à un miracle.” For the multitudes to unify against the *status quo*, the individual must first act alone. An earlier passage reinforces the sense that actions, rather than words, are essential. The narrator’s double seems to express this very thought to himself, in what appears to be free indirect speech: “[s]i un seul pouvait crier à l’injustice, il serait facile pour lui de se procurer des armes, de

faire aussi des morts qu'il opposerait aux zombis du Président" (90). Later, however, he comes to the realization that "les mots ne sont pas et ne font pas la RÉVOLUTION" (93). Finally, even action falls short: revolutionary action is simultaneously what leads to the downfall of the revolt. The narrator describes this final defeat:

Le Président se sent en danger. C'est la première fois qu'on fait une telle action. Au même moment, il lance ses zombis à la poursuite de cette foule de poitrinaires qui sont en rébellion. C'est maintenant une bataille si grande que même les blancs touristes sont effrayés. Une bataille entre morts vivants et zombis. On reçoit des coups de crosse de fusil. Il ne voit pas ceux qui les donnent. Ces zombis sont vraiment des morts que le Président fait revenir à la vie. Lui seul peut les voir et leur parler. La foule que dirige mon personnage est prise de panique. Elle se disperse sous la pluie. Mon personnage est seul au mitan des miliciens. (119)

Unlike the zombies who act as an extension of the President, the organizer of the rebellion cannot fully control the multitudes he is leading. The crowd's heterogeneity becomes clear as "[la foule] se disperse sous la pluie," the multidirectional flight demonstrating the presence of individual drives and consciousnesses within the revolutionary horde. Conversely, the zombies' lack of vitality and willpower makes them obedient and unable to flee even in the face of annihilation. Although the revolutionary masses may seem equivalent to the President's undead guards, they are no match: the former, while directed by a single figure, are the self-constituting product of individuals still in possession of their own will, hence their ability to disperse; the latter have been assembled forcibly, and though they include distinct entities, the guards function solely according to the President's agency. And yet, the altercation is described as "[u]ne bataille entre morts vivants et zombis." The use of synonymous expressions—the Creole *zombi* or *zonbi* is often translated into French as *mort-vivant*—evokes the ways in which internecine conflicts create a false sense of difference within the

nation, pitting one mass against another while simultaneously *collapsing alterity* through dehumanizing anonymous violence. An earlier passage similarly describes a battle taking place on an internal landscape between the narrator and his double as a futile game: “On se déchire. On se fait la guerre. Il n’y a jamais de gagnant, ni de perdant. Nous assemblons nos matériaux. Nous occupons deux camps. Nous nous bataillons, en courant” (96).

In the end, the omnipresent theme of zombification and the constantly shifting semantic field of death evoke the all-consuming nature of totalitarian regimes. While an act of resistance creates the collective consciousness necessary for the transformation of the “foule de poitrinaires en rébellion” into a force to be reckoned with, their uprising is short lived. The revolutionary forces are defeated under the blows of the President’s undead army, causing them to disband. The potential that was promised by their collectivity is thus dispersed, in turn signaling the collapse of heterogeneous, revolutionary groups within the nation into sameness and stasis. If the collective consciousness of the revolutionary multitudes allows them briefly to become a threat to the President’s power, the zombies’ lack of consciousness and the annihilation of their individuality through their psychic death keep them banded together as an army of the undead. This horde does not hunt human flesh to eat or infect its prey; nevertheless, it spreads its ontological state to those inflamed with the spark of life, wreaking death and requiring complicity wherever it goes. In this way, Etienne depicts Duvalier’s Haiti as a zombified nation that is both victim and victimizer, and wholly consumed by the will of one man. Although the United States government is implicated in this consumption, it results primarily from within: the nation preys on itself.

The Proletarian Horde: Frankétienne’s *Les affres d’un défi* (1979)

As opposed to the violently predatory militias in *Le nègre crucifié*, the zombies that people Frankétienne’s 1979 novel *Les affres d’un défi* fit the passive, apathetic mold that predominates in

depictions of the soulless corporeal Haitian folkloric figure. They are beasts of burden and toil ceaselessly in the fields of their master, Saintil. In stylistic terms, the work initially appears quite fragmentary, reflecting the *nouveau roman*-influenced spiralist aesthetic theorized by Frankétienne and others.⁴ Indeed, the narrative voice constantly shifts between the third person and the first person plural or singular (representing, perhaps, the zombies' collective interior "monologue" or the voice of the terrorized townspeople). Likewise, the chronology of the work seems to progress in fits and starts. Passages in boldface, italics, and roman type alternate in no particular pattern and do not seem to represent any particular point of view. Little by little, the tale of a zombie uprising takes shape. What emerges through the textual and thematic chaos is the tyranny of the zombie master over a small Haitian town and the zombification of a singular young man, Clodonis, whose integration to the horde eventually precipitates their freedom. Only once Sultana, daughter of zombie master Saintil, frees the living dead from their catatonic state through the reviving power of salt, are they able to mobilize and take down their oppressors. While the work could be read as an allegory of the Duvalier dictatorship during which it was published, it also takes on a more global significance at the end when zombification comes to symbolize all forms of oppression throughout the world, including slavery and the exploitation of workers under capitalism. The novel's theme of the cockfight is emblematic of the struggle against these similar forms of injustice. Indeed, the central role of the Haitian pastime is even more pronounced in regards to Frankétienne's 1974 Creole-language sister text to *Les affres*, which shares the French-language text's thematic concern with zombies but is entitled simply *Dézafi*, the Creole word for cockfighting. Several scholars have studied these works alone or in comparison.⁵

⁴ He elaborated the theory with fellow Haitian writers René Philoctète and Jean-Claude Fignolé. For more on spiralism, see Kaiama Glover, *Haiti Unbound*.

⁵ See Rachel Douglas, *Frankétienne and Rewriting*. Maximilien Laroche argues: "*Dézafi*, sans aucun doute, marque un tournant de la littérature haïtienne puisqu'il nous révèle une transformation de notre perception collective du personnage romanesque du zombi" (169). The turning point he is referring to is the importance of dezombification.

While the thematic treatment of the living dead in *Les affres d'un défi* has been extensively noted, the means and functions of work's horde merit a comprehensive investigation. I will thus explore how Frankétienne's novel depicts the mechanisms through which the passive zombified *berd* is constituted, then disbanded and reformed as a dynamic dezombified *horde*. This series of transformations closely mirrors Hardt and Negri's description of the disorganized masses becoming "an insurgent multitude against imperial power"—a metamorphosis the critics describe as ontological in nature (394). My examination hinges on the process of depersonalization implicit in the process through which the living are transformed into the living dead—and its reversal, which is effected both thematically and textually at the end of the novel. Three key scenes illustrate this cycle. The first scene, in which the exceptional Clodonis is resurrected and prepared for "son intégration dans l'immense famille des démembrés" (83) depicts the incorporation of the individual subject into an unindividuated mass, whose composition is mediated by a power that "extends throughout the depths of the consciousness and bodies of the population" (Hardt 24). Notably, this integration can take place only after an ontological shift and the reduction of alterity, that which makes him singular in regards to the rest of the group. The reversal of this transformation takes place in the second scene when Sultana forces Clodonis to consume salt, a substance forbidden to zombies according to Haitian folklore since it awakens them from their catatonic state, although the extent to which they may awaken remains up for debate.⁶ The salt restores not only his volition and consciousness (elements integral to the *ti bon ange*) but also his memory. His renewed ability to remember in turn pushes him to revive the rest of the horde. Following the collective transformation of the living dead into "bois nouveaux" or revived zombies, the third and final scene represents the formation of an entirely new type of multitude comprised of individual subjects.

See also Kaiama Glover on verbal prohibition of the zombie in the French-language text (107).

⁶ In *The Magic Island*, William Seabrook describes a second-hand account of a group of zombies given salted candies who, once revived, seek their graves, trampling the mother of one of the unrecognizing zombies in their attempt to get back into the earth (99).

Unlike the zombies in *Le nègre crucifié*, some of the individual members of the horde are named in *Les affres*, thus seemingly setting them apart from the crowd. And yet, this individuation is quickly subverted. When Clodonis undergoes the transformation into a zombie, he is forced to walk down the streets of his town while crying out: “Voilà que passe Clodonis!” (75) This naming process functions as a warning to single him out as a negative example of what happens to dissidents and illustrates the eradication of the individual and its incorporation into the masses. Other moments further mitigate personalized references to Clodonis and other zombies by providing descriptions of the horde in nebulous, unindividuated terms. The bestial vocabulary used in the previous scene to describe Clodonis’s introduction into the horde is repeated frequently when the multitude is described. For example: “Saintil se carre dans un fauteuil. À ses pieds, un troupeau de zombies à genoux sous le péristyle” (8), “**des milliers de zombies pullulent dans ses champs de riz**” (59), “*Ils ont parqué des milliers de zombies dans des cellules exigües privées de tout système d’éclairage et d’aération*” (168); and, although the zombies are not directly referenced: “**La terre a été profondément remuée, labourée par une horde de bêtes affamées**” (113). In these quotes, several verbs and nouns suggest the animality of the zombies: *pulluler* (to swarm or proliferate), *parquer* (to pen or coop up), and *troupeau* (herd). While the *pulluler* suggests the potential threat of a swarm of insects, *parquer* and *troupeau* connote the passivity of domesticated herds. By extension, the multitudes are portrayed as unthinking, passively serving masses. They represent the polar opposite of the unchained power of wild beasts. The Deleuzian concept of the *devenir-animal* allows me to highlight this difference. When Deleuze and Guattari assert that “sous leur forme de meute, les rats sont des rhizomes,” they use their influential concept of the rhizome—which privileges heterogeneity, multiplicity and horizontality—to highlight the amorphous and teeming nature of the pack (13). The animal and the *devenir-animal*, as they define it, both do not represent an altered state of the individual, but its relation to multiplicity. Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of the pack is a formation that

constantly evolves, consisting of discrete entities that do not constitute an entirely coherent unit. The zombie herds in *Les affres*, on the other hand, are part of an overarching order, defined by its domestication and stable hierarchy, and although it technically represents the multitude, in fact the undead act as extensions of their master rather than as individuals. It is not, we will see, until the zombies become *man* once more (it is predominantly a gendered issue: while female zombies are mentioned, none of the former zombies are specified to be women), that the horde exemplifies the sort of rhizomatic form of the *devenir-animal*.

Much of the process of zombification is predicated on the annihilation of identity. In a complementary manner, dezombification functions by the restoration of personality, through elements like volition, feelings, and consciousness. And yet, in *Les affres* this eminently *individual* experience is situated in relation to the *collective*. The turning point leading to the fundamental shift in the horde cannot take place without the intervention of an outside agent, Sultana, whose physical desire for Clodonis, coupled with Zofer's attempts to use it to blackmail her into sexual compliance, drive her to feed the object of her desire the salted concoction that will awaken him. Once underway, this transformation is depicted as a delayed cognition of the repressed past Clodonis could not process in his zombified state: "Sous forme de séquences discontinues, il revoit, de manière floue, le film de sa vie" (186). He is able to recollect several events of his life, including those that led to his zombification. The text transcribes his stream of consciousness by leaving out punctuation and using the first-person narrative voice, thus signifying human thoughts and memory. While amorous desire motivates Sultana, the recovery of memory and ensuing rage pushes Clodonis to revive his fellow zombies: "Reconstituant, en fragments épars, les souffrances vécues comme dans un long cauchemar sous les griffes de Saintil et de Zofer, Clodonis se déchaine en beuglant, tel un taureau enragé. [...] Puis, il bondit dans la cour, défonce toutes les portes des cellules et distribue le bouillon salé à tous les zombis de l'habitation" (189). In his return to life, Clodonis precedes the

rest of the zombies but the subsequent dezombification of the group mirrors his own slow recovery of memory. After the remainder of the horde ingests the salt, “des voix se déchaînent nourries par un flux de pensées imprécises où la raison cherche sa route hors de la gangue des fantômes, dans un enchevêtrement de cris et de paroles” (189-90). Another passage follows that is narrated in the first person singular and devoid of punctuation. A major difference stems from the fact that, unlike the previous scene focusing presenting only snippets from Clodonis’s memory, this one seems to simultaneously interpret the individual, testimonial narratives of numerous members of the collective. It is memory that allows the former zombies to regain their individuality while retaining the coherence as a horde.

After this initial awakening, the order that was imposed upon the zombies by Saintil and Zofer dissolves. A new kind of multitude emerges, one that is perhaps best described as mob-like in form, since it is defined by chaos and unbridled anger, and driven by the sudden return of drive and willpower to the masses. The first act of this mob is to destroy the residence that formed the heart of its former master’s power. The subsequent disarray is evoked both thematically and formally: “Revivifiés par le sel, les anciens zombis, devenus bois-nouveaux, emportés par la rage vengeresse, s’agitent, détruisent, fouillent, bouleversent de fond en comble l’habitation de Saintil. Bousculades. Reversement des murs de l’enfer. Le feu se propage à travers les champs” (191). The long string of destruction-themed verbs conjures up the simultaneous perpetration of each action by the multitudes, while the nominal sentences that follow (“[b]ousculades,” “[r]eversement des murs”) reflect the immediacy of their actions. After the complete demolition of the house, “[l]es bois-nouveaux, tels des chiens affamés pris de rage, se précipitent hors de l’habitation dans une horrible anarchie” (193). The passive herd of beasts of burden seems to have undergone a complete transformation into a hungry pack of wild dogs. The expression “une horrible anarchie,” and subsequent assertion that “[l]a raison s’égare et les pulsions ténébreuses émergent, l’instant même où

tout devient possible: la barbarie, le viol, la fuite solitaire, le refuge familial, le pillage, la destruction aveugle, la pagaille,” imply that a world without order is not a viable alternative to the totalitarian society (193).⁷ That solitary flight and family refuge should be placed along the lines with rape and pillaging suggests that the lack of solidarity found in this chaotic mob is equally detrimental to the community. As the verb “s’égarer” suggests, the initial awakening of the zombies’ individual intellects is highly problematic if the revived men are not directed towards the right targets.

Tellingly, it is only after a speech by Clodonis, in which he exhorts, “[n]ous devons éviter la dispersion et la violence gratuite”—dispersal once again seen as a threat detrimental to a directed and united consciousness—, that the horde integrates the peasants into its ranks and crushes Saintil himself (193). If the first stage in the evolution of the dezombified horde is defined by a vengeful mob mentality, the masses next take on yet another form, described as “la coalition des paysans et des bois-nouveaux” (198). Unlike the angry mob that tears down the instruments of Saintil’s power, this coalition presents a directional, unified front. This “communauté debout contre la tyrannie” takes shape after Clodonis and Jérôme, a student tortured for his suspected political leanings, articulate this collective will in speeches to the zombies and peasants, a fact that illustrates the power of discourse in organizing the multitudes (198). In contrast with the linguistic chaos of the dezombification scenes, Jérôme’s speeches are punctuated and orderly. If the speech format seems to privilege one individual over the many, Jérôme’s address seems to channel the energy of the multitude: “quand il parvient à trouver les mots-clés pour exprimer la vérité et convaincre son auditoire, il sent alors s’infiltrer en lui une chaleur immense, la chaleur d’une foule consciente de sa force” (198). This newly united collective differs from the imposed order of the zombie horde in a key way. Its basis and aim are the restoration rather than the annihilation of the individual. As he

⁷ In *Frankétienne and Rewriting*, Rachel Douglas suggests convincingly that the corresponding scene from *Les affres*’ sister text *Dezafi*, the Creole text rewritten in 2002, was reworked to function as a critique of the process of “déchouage” that followed the Duvalier regime and “came to be associated with disorganized, widespread, and frequently gratuitous violence” (57).

rallies the multitudes, Jérôme states: “[b]eaucoup d’autres zombis croupissent dans la misère et l’inconscience au fond des montagnes, à l’intérieur des plaines et jusque dans les villes. Allons les réveiller par le sel. Pour garantir les visas de l’aube, soyons d’infatigables semeurs de sel” (199).⁸ The borders of the coalition are thus permeable, allowing for an influx of new members, the “visa” of restored consciousness and freedom being the document that offers entry into the collectivity.⁹

Despite the potential for such calls to collective action to be read as the signs of politically engaged work of the sort elaborated by Jean-Paul Sartre in *Qu’est-ce que la littérature*, Rachel Douglas convincingly suggests the Haitian writer’s work is not intended to have a specifically socialist import, basing her argument on biographical circumstances and the general vagueness of the means to revolution in *Les affres* (*Frankétienne* 47-50). Nevertheless, since depictions of the living dead toiling in the fields are abundant in the novel, it is difficult to ignore the text’s numerous depictions of the zombies as exploited manual workers. Moreover, the “new” proletariat, as Hardt and Negri define it, is comprised not of a select class, but rather of “all those whose labor is exploited by capital, the entire cooperating multitude” (402). This boundary-transcending collective is the type of inclusive mass embodied by the horde in the end, when it comes to include the former zombies and the terrorized peasants. In its shifting ontological states, the horde of *Les affres d’un défi* becomes the concrete representation of a variety of collective formations. Initially embodying the inertia of the passive, unorganized masses—downtrodden manual laborers or the enslaved, victims of the capitalist cogs or of totalitarianism—it comes to exemplify the violence and chaos unleashed by the mob formation, before finally representing the united consciousness of the coalition. While the zombie horde is defined by the annihilation of the individual as it is integrated into the multitude,

⁸ The metaphor “semeurs de sel” forms a counterpoint to René Depestre’s description in *Bonjour et adieu à la négritude* of the colonized as “[p]euples-zombis, [qui] se firent ardemment voleurs du feu et du sel qui réveillent l’homme dans l’esclave” (10).

⁹ If Sarah Juliet Lauro and Karen Embry assert that “the zombie horde is a swarm where no trace of the individual remains,” the undead masses serve as a foil to the dezombified horde’s individualized multitude (89).

the coalition contains the particular within the multiple at its very inception, as the independent volitions of its members coalesce into the same will to freedom. Indeed, while some characters are singled out in their role revolutionizing the horde, a trio of individuals leads the new coalition. Moreover, the revived horde they organize purposely seeks to awaken other zombies to share their newly acquired freedom. If collective action and cooperation is the key theme of *Les affres d'un défi*, the awakening of individual consciousness, memory, will and desire is at the heart of this multitude.

The Phantasmal Horde: Dany Laferrière's *Pays sans chapeau* (1996)

Published in 1996, *Pays sans chapeau* is the seventh in Laferrière's series of auto-fictional novels, the *Autobiographie américaine*. It documents the return home of the narrator—alternately referred to as “Vieux Os” or “Laferrière”—on his first visit to Haiti after twenty years in exile. The frontiers between life and death are constantly being explored and reexamined in Laferrière's novel. The titular “pays sans chapeau” is the translation of an idiomatic expression in Haitian Creole that refers to the afterlife (no one is buried wearing a hat). Formally, this division initially appears to be played out in two separate sections. The first, “Pays réel,” is defined as “la lutte pour la survie” (47) and is further broken down into subheadings such as “Les objets” (24) or “La langue” (84) that promise a descriptive, realist and/or ethnographic mode of writing; the second, “Pays rêvé,” or “tous les fantasmes du peuple le plus mégalomane de la planète” (47), is made up of unified sections that initially deal with more metaphysical questions, including the enigma of the zombie army. Ultimately, these two sections are conflated, and the dichotomy is subverted.¹⁰

Pays sans chapeau is certainly inextricably entangled with its literary antecedents. The novel was published almost twenty years after Frankétienne's tale of a zombie uprising, and more than fifty years after Jacques Roumain's famous 1944 exemplar of the Indigenist movement, *Gouverneurs de la*

¹⁰ On this issue, see Nathalie Courcy.

rosée. Indeed, critical writing on *Pays sans chapeau* has largely dealt with its parodic references to Roumain's (in)famous novel. J. Michael Dash, Martin Munro, and Jana Evans Braziel have all revealed different aspects of this issue. The canonical texts of Roumain and Frankétienne "perform revolutions," as Rachel Douglas calls it, proffering solutions to Haiti's struggles ("Haitian Revolutions").¹¹ Conversely, Laferrière both refuses any prescriptive message and demystifies the literary *topos* of the collective uprising. By anchoring the zombie horde firmly within the space of the Haitian imaginary, nevertheless inextricably entangled with the historical "real," he speaks to the ways in which national myths are created and transformed, and reflects on how the nation's literary tradition intersects with these legends. Rather than focusing on *Pays sans chapeau* in terms of intertext, I will be exploring how the novel portrays the proliferation of the myth of the undead. First, I will investigate the limits and avatars of the zombie as myth for Laferrière. In particular, I ask how the horde comes into being, not just literally at the level of plot, but meta-fictionally speaking, as a legend.

The myth of a zombie army is one of the recurring elements of the sections entitled "Pays rêvé." Initially appearing in the text when the narrator finds his mother telling a neighbor about her encounter with a *bizango* (the member of a highly-feared secret society), the army embodies Marie's fear that in Haiti, "[n]ous sommes tous déjà morts" (102).¹² Vieux Os initially attributes the story to his mother's "capacité pratiquement illimitée à revivre ses peurs nocturnes" (102). However, her tales move beyond the personal to take on a widespread, national scope. When the narrator asks her what she is afraid of, she answers:

¹¹ I use Douglas's expression loosely, as she focuses on formal innovations. However, her introduction hints at the thematic revolutions that I am concerned with here and that inevitably echo the major Revolution in Haiti's past.

¹² Similarly, *Gouverneurs* begins with a prediction of collective death spoken by the hero's mother, Délira: "Nous mourrons tous" (1). What appears to be a failed prophecy in Roumain's novel is resituated in the past (tense) in *Pays sans chapeau* where it thus becomes a *fait accompli*.

L'armée des zombis[...]. Ils sont des dizaines de milliers. Les prêtres vaudous ont ratissés le pays du nord au sud, de l'est à l'ouest. Ils ont ratissé tous les cimetières du pays. Ils ont réveillé tous les morts qui dormaient du sommeil du juste. Partout – ma mère fait le geste en ouvrant ses bras largement et en pointant ses doigts dans toutes les directions. Au Borgne, à Port-Margot, Dondon, Jérémie, Cayes, Limonade, Petit-Trou, Baradères, Jean-Rabel, Petit-Goâve, oui, Petit-Goâve aussi... Ils sont même allés chercher des morts jusqu'au pic Brigand dans le massif du nord. [...] Ils sont vraiment allés partout. (49)

Although it is not quite clear *who* exactly his mother thinks is responsible for bringing the dead back to life, the operation appears to be a grim reality. At the textual level, the pervasiveness of this widespread transformation is signaled by the accumulation of place names and the repetition of the word *tout*—"tous les cimetières," "tous les morts," "partout," his mother points "dans toutes les directions"—that almost function as surrogates for the living dead themselves. Although the narrator's mother appears fully immersed in the veracity of her own tale, its fantastic quality is highlighted by her concern with Vieux Os' reaction: he notes, "[e]lle me jette de vifs regards pour tenter de voir l'effet de ses paroles sur moi. Je dois avoir l'air fasciné puisqu'elle poursuit avec un léger sourire au coin des lèvres" (49). This suggests that her story's increasingly hyperbolic nature is largely performative. That is to say, the multitudes grow exponentially in relation to her audience's reaction. The creation of the zombie horde is thus addressed not only as *literal* accumulation of reanimated corpses, but rather also as *literary* or mythic proliferation.

The profusion of the dead found in Marie's description of the zombie army appears not only in textual genres inherently marked as fiction, such as folktales and novels, but also in discourse meant to be read as revelatory of the "real." In typical Laferrière fashion, *Pays sans chapeau* playfully blurs the lines between historical reality and fiction, pulling straight from the newspaper headlines

interim president Emile Jonassaint's threats to use force, in the form of zombies, against U.S. invaders (Girard 2-3). The following passage, an extension of the narrator's discussion with his mother about the undead army, illustrates this ambiguity, while concurrently providing more insight into the intra-diegetic constitution of the horde.

Ah ! Je me souviens de cette armée de zombis que le vieux Président avait menacé de lancer contre les Américains s'ils osaient mettre un seul pied sur le sol d'Haïti. Le général de l'armée morte. Je me souviens très bien de cet épisode. J'étais à Miami, à l'époque, et le *Miami Herald* avait rapporté les paroles du vieux Président. Où était donc cette armée quand les Américains ont débarqué? [...]

—Elle était là, finit-elle par articuler. Elle a attendu les ordres. Finalement, le vieux Président a conclu un pacte avec le jeune Président américain. L'armée américaine occupera le pays durant le jour. L'armée des zombis l'aura la nuit à sa disposition.

(64)

Rather than viewing the failure of the zombie army to materialize as the sign of an empty threat, as Vieux Os seems to suggest when he presses his mother for an explanation, she seems to offer an even more fantastic account, one that highlights the often sensational nature of international politics. Fittingly, then, the narrator notes the absurd logic of the pact concluded with the Americans, explaining: “[f]aut dire que la seule panique du soldat américain [...] c'était de circuler dans la nuit haïtienne” (65). While the earlier discussion between Vieux Os and his mother highlighted her own anxiety, on the contrary, this passage underscores the function of the horde as an embodiment of the Westerner's eroticized, racially-inflected fantasies about the Caribbean. In this way, the zombie becomes an emblem of the persistence of intra-national and inter-national myths. In more literal terms, the “armée morte” is portrayed as an integral part of Haiti's extant power structures, commanded by the president and reinforcing his control, while the nation's borders, that can be

inferred from the emphatic statement “s’ils osaient mettre un seul pied sur le sol d’Haïti,” are ostensibly reinforced by the undead.

While Marie, the maternal figure, is a primary source of information regarding the zombie army, her role is to ensure the transmission of a *collective* myth. She is a native informant without any official credentials. For this reason, Vieux Os continually questions the accuracy of her tale and finally looks to an “expert,” Haitian ethnography professor J. B. Romain, for more authoritative answers.¹³ The intellectual has a very different explanation, one that reveals the constantly shifting landscape of the legendary multitudes. He describes a “petite révolte paysanne” in the impoverished Northwestern part of Haiti, against a rich landowner who has a monopoly on the region’s water supply. Romain explains how he attempts to retaliate: “Désira Désilus fait venir une demi-douzaine de gendarmes des casernes de Port-de-Paix pour mater la révolte dans l’œuf comme on dit” (73). However, when the soldiers ask the peasants to leave, “[c]eux-ci refusent, sortent leurs machettes” (73). It seems likely that they are zombies when they continue to advance even after the soldiers have fired on them, and Romain eventually admits this fact after Vieux-Os presses him for details, noting that one of the soldiers recognized one of the peasants, a man who had died years earlier. It is not only unclear whether the men were zombies or not; the singular nature of the event is also put under the microscope. When the narrator protests, “ce n’est pas nouveau en Haïti, professeur,” Romain counters, “c’est la première fois qu’on assiste à une révolte de zombis... Généralement, le zombi n’a aucune volonté. Il n’arrive même pas à tenir sa tête droite. Il ne fait qu’obéir” (74). However, the reason behind this new formation is unresolved, deemed “un secret d’état.” And yet, it is suggested that the two types of zombie hordes are connected: when Vieux-Os asks if it is true that “le vieux Président a levé une armée de zombis pour faire face à l’armée américaine,” Romain’s enigmatic answer, “[j]e vous laisse déduire ça” (75).

¹³ This is an obvious reference to the famous Haitian author tied to the indigenous movement Jacques Roumain.

The enigmatic *tête-à-tête* of this passage reconfigures the convention that states the zombie is dispossessed of its will and incapable of action, either individually or collectively.¹⁴ The rebellion implied by the Professor could be a reference to Frankétienne's *Les affres d'un défi*. However, Frankétienne's novel posits dezombification—an allegory for collective *prise de conscience* as the undead are awakened from their stupor—as a requisite for revolution. René Depestre asserts that “[t]out semblerait indiquer qu’il n’y a pas de lien de solidarité possible dans le désert sans sel ni tendresse de la zomberie. Il n’y aurait pas d’unité ” (*Hadriana* 131). On the other hand, the language of this particular scene from *Pays sans chapeau* suggests the zombie horde can and *does* possess the ability to mobilize—even if it is “la première fois qu’on assiste à une révolte de zombis” (74). This scene may implicitly critique the assumption, found in certain canonical works of Haitian literature, that the people's need to be galvanized into action by a privileged individual or group in order to take any revolutionary action.¹⁵ Instead, in *Pays sans chapeau* the capacity for change already exists but is constantly thwarted, smothered, or redirected. While the horde struggles against economic and political oppression, the forces working against it are powerful. To begin with, the revolutionary forces are deemed a “state secret” and therefore effectively excluded from the national narrative, perhaps because it could prove contagious, the tale potentially inspiring other movements of rebellion. Another reason for the official silencing of the zombie uprising might be the apparent connection between the two very different types of masses: whereas the zombie army reinforces the *status quo*, protecting its master's control over the nation, the peasant throng has no clear leader or master when it attempts to overturn the current state of affairs. And yet, when the narrator asks Romain about the *former*—that is to say, the zombie army—he responds that it all began with the *latter*—the undead revolt. Somehow, it would appear that the potential for change embodied by the

¹⁴ On the intertext with Roumain's *Gouverneurs*, see Martin Munro.

¹⁵ One might think, for instance, of *Gouverneurs*, *Les affres*, and arguably Jacques Stephen Alexis's *Compère Général Soleil* (1955).

peasant uprising was snuffed out and transformed into forces of stasis, represented by the president's legions of living dead soldiers. Then again, given the parodic treatment of Romain in the novel, perhaps the story itself should be called into question. In the end, it seems, Romain's "expert" opinion only adds to the proliferation of disparate, irreconcilable narratives that confront the narrator as he attempts to comprehend the current state of the nation.

The zombified multitudes in *Pays sans chapeau* take on two very different formations: from the all-encompassing army formed, according to the narrator's mother, by the former President, to the seemingly spontaneously organized revolt of the peasants. They represent the powerful forces behind the *status quo* and the potential for change: the ability of the elite to assemble throngs in their control, and of the people to rise up cooperatively against the powers that be. The one avatar they do not assume is a material form. Unlike in *Le nègre crucifié* or *Les affres d'un défi*, where the living dead exist at the level of plot, these throngs are only ever "present" discursively, seemingly remaining phantasmal, immaterial expressions of the collective imagination. These hordes take shape both in the minds of Haitians such as the narrator's mother Marie and Dr. J. B. Romain, but also, according to Vieux Os, foreigners like the North American soldiers occupying the country. And yet, these living dead entities are not entirely divorced from the "real." They appear in stories from two very different types of native informants—not just the mother's apparently fantastical "folk" tales (her status is not legitimized by any institution), but also an ostensibly official governmental account given the stamp of anthropological accuracy (Romain is a well-respected professor). They also appear in international newspapers meant to contain discourses of the "real." If these sources are, in fact, implicitly called into question because of Laferrière's parodic treatment, it remains evident that the zombie myth functions as the fantastic reflection of Haiti's socio-political realities, the fictional incarnation of the opposing factions that have plagued the nation from its inception.

It is now widely accepted that one should not assume, as Fredric Jameson (in)famously argued, that “[a]ll third-world texts [...] are to be read as [...] *national allegories*” (70). However, this assertion is precisely true as far as literary depictions of the (Haitian) zombie horde are concerned. The trope of the undead masses is deployed by Gérard Étienne, Frankétienne, and Laferrière in order to represent and interrogate factions within the nation as well as the nation’s boundaries. Viewed globally, these zombie hordes represent collective movements and opposing factions within the domestic sphere. Although these formations occasionally transgress national boundaries, primarily in their revolutionary form (in *Les affres* the quest to share the revivifying salt takes on a universal scope), they often respect and reinforce borders, sharing control over the country with the United States in *Pays sans chapeau* and protecting the control of the dictator in *Le nègre crucifié*. They fit within a broader vein in Haitian literature of representations of revolutions and uprisings, a trend inspired by the nation’s foundational revolt but also by its ever-tumultuous socio-political situation. *Le nègre crucifié* (1974) and *Les affres d’un défi* (1979), with its Creole-language textual twin *Dézafî* (1974), mark a turning point for the literary zombie. In these works, the living dead figure no longer functions as a symbol of the slave or colonized subject. Instead, the zombie takes on a new life as part of the Duvalier era, where it emblemizes internecine conflict, including oppression not by outside forces but by fellow Haitians. The timing of these works is significant; both were published shortly after François Duvalier’s rule ended when he died in 1971. If at least one prior work can be read as a critique of the Duvalier regime (Jacques Stéphen Alexis’s tale of a zombie bride, “Chronique d’un faux-amour”), through their use of the horde, Frankétienne and Gérard Etienne offer an explicit allegory for the collective masses subjugated to the dictator.

Le nègre crucifié, *Les affres d’un défi*, and *Pays sans chapeau* show how representations of the horde are as numerous as the multitudes that people it, shifting and taking on new forms in order to reflect constantly shifting socio-political situations. By literally reviving the zombies in his novel,

Frankétienne also renews the legendary creature itself: it never achieved such a complete recovery from its liminal state in previous fictional or anthropological works. The “proletarian” horde of *Les affres d’un défi* is able to achieve a social upheaval by uniting across a number of boundaries. Toward the other end of the spectrum, Gérard Etienne’s “predatory horde” imbues the multitudes with a hunger for violence appearing much more frequently in zombie films (starting with Romero’s 1968 *Night of the Living Dead*) than in tales of the Haitian slave. Etienne’s horde brutally quashes the revolutionary body, suggesting the impossibility of resistance. Appearing roughly twenty years later, Laferrière’s *Pays sans chapeau* takes up what is by the mid-1990s a cliché of Haitian fiction. As it takes on divergent and often contradictory forms, Laferrière’s “phantasmal horde” represents a culmination of, and engagement with, the mythic proliferation of the monster. Of the three novels we have studied, *Pays sans chapeau* supplies the only innovation to the zombie legend—the first-ever zombie revolt (as opposed with Frankétienne’s revolt of *former* zombies)—that is glossed as such within the text, a fact that attests to the particularly meta-literary concern of this highly intertextual novel. Through this self-conscious awareness of preceding zombie stories, the literal accumulation of the living dead becomes metaphorical for the proliferation of the accounts that concern them. That is to say, the novel’s numerous and often contradictory evocations of the horde become symbolic of the multiplicity of voices and national narratives that do not cohere into a unified vision, and in this way represent innumerability and inexpressibility. Ultimately, by making their national allegories into zombie tales, Gérard Étienne, Frankétienne and Dany Laferrière firmly posit the *topos* of the uprising—so prevalent in Haitian literature—as the stuff of legend. If their three novels are connected to the socio-political realities of Haiti, these authors simultaneously invoke the power of national narratives, and the limits of literary revolutions.

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