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Translation, Decolonial Futures, and More-than-Human: Caribbean Utopia in Lahens' *Bain de Lune*

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Abstract

This article highlights critical utopian proposals in a decolonial framework that have emerged in Abya Yala and the Caribbean, reclaiming counter-hegemonic temporalities and proposing, with an eye to the past, present and future paths of degrowth and epistemic and ecological relationality. From this fertile ground, this paper focuses on Franco-Creole women's narratives and delves into their eco-ethical and epistemic alternatives to colonial, capitalist, patriarchal, and extractivist systems that threaten bodies, territories, languages, and ancestral knowledges. Specifically, through a translatological analysis of Haitian Yanick Lahens' *Bain de Lune*, translation is proposed as a key tool for amplifying these voices from the tropics and promoting a more horizontal, posthuman, and situated dialogue that acknowledges the intersecting oppressions affecting Caribbean lands, humans, and more-than-humans. Translation acts as a decolonial de/re-territorialization mechanism, enabling the circulation of knowledge once transmitted orally and now preserved in Caribbean women's writing. Indeed, these agro-ecological, medicinal, and supernatural knowledges rearticulate the connection to the dispossessed territories and propose other non-anthropocentric and non-teleological ways of imagining the world as a valuable guide for envisioning futures that break the dominant ecocidal and epistemicidal cycle.

Keywords: decoloniality, ecotranslation, Caribbean futurisms, Franco-Creole literature, feminist translation, ecocriticism, utopia, more-than-human

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Introduction

The Caribbean represents a fertile territory for engaging with the dialogue between decoloniality and ecologism from a perspective of epistemic relationality. Due to its history deeply marked by colonization and extractivism, we can find in the narratives of its islands a resistance to Western conceptions of nature and humanity. Indeed, the Caribbean was one of the first territories to experience the ravages of European colonization that ushered in Modernity in the 15th and 16th centuries (Dussel, 1994; DeLoughrey et al., 2005). This region concentrated many of the processes of violence that this irruption entailed: from the expropriation and exploitation of land and bodies, both human and non-human, to the subjugation of (super)natural knowledge and languages conveying non-anthropocentric ontologies, and the radical reconfiguration of the ways of life and ecosystems. The introduction of European agricultural systems, the imposition of monocultures, and the over-exploitation of nature led not only to environmental degradation but also to the extinction of cultural and spiritual practices based on non-anthropocentric relationships with nature. The imposition of the extractivist logic of modern scientism rendered numerous narratives and cosmogonies that linked humans to nature in a symbiotic way invisible, leading to what authors such as Édouard Glissant (1990) have called the "de-rooting of the sacred".

In this sense, although many of the foundations of this paper are in line with numerous premises of feminist critical posthumanism (Braidotti, 2013, 2021; Haraway, 1991, 2019), since the aim of this article is to propose decolonial alternatives, I choose to make visible other non-anthropocentric knowledge and concepts born from and by Abyalayan[1] and Caribbean territories. Indeed, many Western concepts that are now the standard bearers of new materialism and posthumanist studies were already named and used by communities and thinkers of the tropics (see Benitez & Lundberg, 2022). Ideas such as "becoming with," "making kin", and "tentacular thinking" were present in Indigenous and African cosmovisions centuries ago (see Escobar, 2018), just as "sympoiesis" was present in the foundational myths of some Mesoamerican cultures, such as the Popol Vuh. Likewise, in the image of what Haraway calls Chthulucene, referring to the Greek telluric gods, Yanick Lahens and other contemporary Haitian authors who give voice to their ancestors also urge us to stop looking upward and to look toward the earth, where the subterranean divinities of the

[1] For reasons of epistemic and linguistic justice, and as an explicit rejection of colonial and Eurocentric structures, I emphasize my preference for the term Abya Yala (meaning 'land in full maturity,' 'land of blood,' or 'living land' in the Kuna language) over 'Latin America.' However, the occasional use of the adjective 'Latin American' is maintained strictly for practical purposes or when referencing other authors' terminology. Abya Yala was popularized by the Bolivian indigenist Takir Mamani and is now widely used in decolonial academic and activist circles. Although the term is usually associated with the continental territory, its scope can include the Caribbean territories as they share the same historical and cultural substratum of colonization and resistance.

Vodou await and accompany us, whose imagery suggests a symbiosis with other species and elements.

Haiti, as an amalgam of the processes of rupture, spoliation, and re-appropriation resulting from the colonial wound, is key to understanding the dynamics of coloniality given its pioneering role in the struggles for independence, with the only successful slave revolution in history that led to its independence in 1804, making Haiti the first Black republic. It also brings us closer to a situated view of the processes of fermentation and revitalization of extractivism from the beginning of Modernity to the present day, as well as its ecological and social consequences, which make this insular territory one of the most vulnerable in the face of the climate crisis. Indeed, since its time as the French colony of Saint-Domingue, its sovereignty has been steadily eroded by outside powers, from crippling reparations demanded by France to decades of US military occupation and interference. Meanwhile, other former French colonial territories in the Caribbean (Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana) remain under French rule as DOM-TOMs (overseas departments), a category that, despite its pretensions of equality, masks colonial dynamics of economic dependence, (neo)extractivism, and political subordination. Like Haiti, these territories struggle against the legacies of plantation economies, racialized labor systems, and epistemic, linguistic, and ecological erasure.

Contemporary antidoudouist[2] literature, which emerges in this context, mirrors these struggles from a position that rejects traditional colonial hierarchies that subordinate the non-human to human control and exploitation and destabilizes the linear temporality of Western developmentalism. Few novels intertwine these themes as seamlessly as *Bain de Lune*, which deepens and maps these complexities through embodied experiences of climate disaster, taking language permeated by these intricate power dynamics as an instrument of resistance. The author, Yanick Lahens, transcends not only the binarisms between dominant language—French—and dominated language—Creole—but also between human and more-than-human as well as between pasts and futures. This is achieved through a narrative in which it is possible to visualize multiple processes of (self-)translation that navigate between epistemes, communication systems, non-solo-human sensoriality, and collective forms of (re)articulation. An intersection that allows us to imagine a future in which extractivist relations are dismantled, favoring the flourishing of other ways of living and being in the world.

[2] Doudou and doudouisme are terms that began to be used by several Antillean authors in critical intellectual journals such as *Légitime Défense* and *Tropiques* from the 1930s onwards to refer to and critique the prevailing literary productions that represented the Antillean reality in an exotic and stereotyped manner, created to please the metropolitan gaze. One of the most emblematic and powerful discourses against this alienating literature is that of Suzanne Roussi-Césaire in *Tropiques* nº4 (1942), where she decrees “la mort de la littérature doudou,” de la “littérature de hamac. Littérature de sucre et de vanille. Tourisme littéraire.”

With this in mind, this paper examines the potential of Franco-Creolophone narratives in proposing ecoethical epistemic alternatives to the colonial, patriarchal, and extractivist capitalist system that perpetuates the dispossession of bodies, territories, and ancestral knowledge. This discussion is framed through a decolonial reconceptualization of utopias and futurisms and will be illustrated through a translatological analysis of the novel. To this end, aligning myself with the still largely non-existent perspectives of ecotranslation (Badenes & Coisson, 2010; Cronin, 2017) and with critical positions on translation, which understand it as a socio-discursive practice historically inscribed in power relations and the geopolitics of knowledge (Sánchez, 2018), I argue for translation as a translinguistic and transdisciplinary practice that cannot be reduced to the mere interlinguistic transfer of texts. The relevance of approaching this analysis from a translatological point of view lies in its potential to disrupt both "the 'coloniality of language' and monolingualism by facilitating the co-existence of multiple (and fluid) languages, subjectivities, and epistemologies" to help us to "theorize and exercise alternative planetary visions of being, knowing, and relating" (Ergun, 2021, p. 121, drawing on Lugones 2010). Indeed, in addition to providing theoretical and methodological tools for an ethical approach to the literary translation of Caribbean texts, the translatological approach delves into the multiple processes of translation that occur between languages, temporalities, cultures, experiences, bodies, and spaces, involving negotiations of identity, belonging, and displacement. This connects the linguistic with the experiential, considering translation as "an ethical praxis of meaning making and knowledge production" (Ergun, 2021, p. 115). Translation thus serves as a conceptual framework that articulates multiple levels of human and non-human interaction, from the linguistic and literary to the social, cultural, and environmental.

Accordingly, by linking decolonial movements, community feminisms, and non-anthropocentric conceptions of Abya Yala to translation studies, I will first show how decolonial thought, in its various forms, inherently possesses a will to project toward futures that respect peoples, temporalities, knowledges, and species. I do this by drawing on the pioneering critical tools developed by Caribbean and Abyayalan women. The focus then turns to the scope of narratives and imaginaries in the (eco)epistemic (re)construction of the dispossessed, which are highlighted through the intersectional analysis of the novel *Bain de Lune*, to finally enunciate some useful tools for theoretical and praxical approaches to translation.

Decolonial Futures and Temporalities: Abya Yala and Caribbean Utopia

It is not entirely far-fetched to claim that the future belongs to the West, as it is from the temperate zone that the metanarrative of progress was forged, along with the linear, teleological, and unidirectional view of time, exacerbated by the consolidation

of technical and industrial development, which resulted in the capitalist view of time as a resource. This has been analyzed by authors such as Walter Benjamin (1942/2024) or Johannes Fabian (1983). However, it has been Latin American critical theory that has most focused on highlighting the logics of power underlying this temporal directionality and how Western powers have used it to legitimize the colonial and extractive model (see Lander, 1995; Dussel, 1994; Escobar, 2014)—a perceptive imposition that led to the erasure of all epistemes that did not direct their efforts toward unlimited technical and economic growth, labeling as "backward" all peoples and knowledges that did not fit into this productivist linearity.

Yet, understanding and questioning this univocal conception of the future does not mean renouncing the construction of becomings; quite the contrary. In the face of the terrible economic, political, climatic, and warlike panorama, far from proclaiming the end of history (Fukuyama, 1989), the critical thinking of Abya Yala and the Caribbean has constantly sought the necessary tools to build a future that respects human and non-human communities. But it has done so by imbuing other temporalities that undermine this verticality and make possible relational processes such as those that some thinkers from the Global South have termed dialogues of knowledges (Leff, 2004), social ecologies (Gómez-Barris, 2017), or epistemological pluralism (Costa et al., 2000). These perspectives, along the lines of “pluriverse” (Escobar, 2014), “pluriversalism” (Grosfoguel, 2008), or “diversality” (Bernabé et al., 1993), constitute an ecology because they are based on the recognition of the plurality of heterogeneous knowledges: both those that remain hidden under the dominant structures of power and knowledge or “submerged perspectives” (Gómez-Barris 2017) and Western hegemonic knowledges, and on the continuous and dynamic interconnections between them.[3]

As part of these epistemic ecologies, many decolonial thinkers take up the perception shared by different Abya Yala and Caribbean cosmovisions that the future is not necessarily ahead, which, as we shall see, runs through the novel analyzed. For Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2018), for example, there is a pan-Amerindian conception of time as a spiral in which past and future are contained within the present. This worldview is particularly reflected in the Aymara aphorism *qhipnayra uñtasis sarnaqapxañani* which can be translated as “looking back and forward (to the future-past)”. In fact, resistance to the delimited, domesticated, and accelerated time of the Capitalocene necessarily entails a search for futures more attuned to the past; it requires a temporal decolonization that constellates diverse planes and coexisting cycles within both human and non-human life systems. These counter-hegemonic conceptions of time,

[3] These tools seek to build upon all epistemic wealth those elements that are valuable for the (re)construction of the future, in pursuit of epistemic justice (Fricker, 2007) and “transmodernity” (Dussel, 2015), which constitutes the horizon towards which society should aspire, representing the utopia of the decolonial project.

fostered by Indigenous temporal systems, are beginning to be debated in academia through recent concepts such as “chronotropics” (Ferly & Zimmerman, 2023) or “ancestral future” (Krenak, 2024).

However, nearly a century ago, proposals from the Caribbean were already demanding a renegotiation of both spatiotemporal and interspecies relations. Certainly, one of the first voices to strongly criticize "the idea of continuous progress," according to which "civilization advanced in a straight line from barbarism to high modern culture," was that of Suzanne Roussi-Césaire (1941/2009, pp. 36-37, my translation). The essayistic and literary production of this Martinican writer, professor, and activist was condensed in the journal *Tropiques*, of which she was a co-founder and which laid the foundations of the anticolonial movement of Négritude. However, her pioneering ideas were eclipsed precisely by the "founding fathers" of this movement, particularly by her husband, Aimé Césaire. Already in the 1940s, she anticipated the theses of degrowth by identifying the link between capitalism, teleological development, and coloniality, as well as their consequences on ecology at a planetary level, advocating for an “*avenir autre*" to counter it:

> It seems that Euro-American humanity was struck in the 19th century by a true madness of science, technique, and machines, the result of which was imperialist thought, creating the world economy and surrounding the globe. This true madness of power and domination shakes humanity into catastrophes…. This is the tragedy of the earth. (Roussi-Césaire 1941/2009, p. 39, my translation).

She also laid the foundations for the critique of anthropocentrism and of rationality as a means to dominate all other life systems, as seen in several of the journal's articles: “To these crowds, they taught the victory of intelligence over the world, and the submission of the forces of nature to man” (Roussi-Césaire, 1941/2009, p. 50, my translation). Anticipating some of the premises that are now key in posthumanist thought and ethics of care, she displayed a "tentacular" thinking *avant la lettre* and recognized the centrality of vulnerability, the de-hierarchization and interdependence among species, exposing the need to keep humanity in "its true place, fragile and dependent" (p. 51, my translation). Drawing inspiration from the performativity of surrealism, a movement that *Tropiques* sought to valorize and align with its anticolonial political and poetic proposals, this author defended the capacity of literary discourse to “imagine, on these tropical lands finally returned to their internal truth, the lasting and fruitful agreement between man and soil. Under the sign of the plant” (p. 74, my translation). This is precisely why, in order to achieve this transmodern and eco-epistemic utopia, it is not enough to implement political and philosophical initiatives; creativity, imagination, and art also have an essential role to play.

Aesthetics of Relation and Creole Futurisms as Bridges to Utopia

For many decolonial thinkers, such as Aníbal Quijano, "there is an aesthetic sense in every utopia, without which it would not be possible to orient the antennae of the imaginary of society towards another historical sense" (1990, p. 733, my translation). It is at this point of imaginary creation that the redefined idea of the future and that of utopia converge in meaning, as poetic creation helps us to "surpass ourselves, and…introduces us to a new time" (Roussi-Césaire, 1941/2009, p. 46, my translation). Sometimes the only way to transcend the hegemonic temporal structures is poetic creation, through which the human being, "unburdened from the entrails of duration and of the extension by the full power of poetry, sees clearly into his past which is at the same time his future" (p. 60, my translation). It is striking how the writings of the Martinican intellectual echo a profound affinity with Amerindian conceptions of time, while also anticipating the utopian tendency of her co-national Glissant. This is reflected in the concept of the latter's "prophetic vision of the past" (1981), which would serve to unravel a painful sense of time and project it forward continuously, without resorting to the temporal frameworks of temperate Western societies.

One of the invisible threads that intertwine utopian action with the translatological exercise is their shared capacity to detect fissures, unravel power dynamics, and outline possible reparations. Herein lies Glissant's utopian tendency, likewise insinuated in the novel *Bain de Lune*, which is characterized by being apophatic and critical, as is well summarized by the phrase, "Utopia is not a dream. It is what we lack in the world" (2005, p. 16, my translation). His utopian vision does not necessarily aspire to a regeneration of the real but to detect its gaps, its cracks. For Glissant, utopia can only offer hope in a heuristic exercise on the fundamental lack that he calls "*le gouffre*" (1990), the matrix of trafficking and primordial trauma, in reference to the genocidal abyss of the slave ships that amputated several cultures and peoples and forcibly created new ones. Thus, as Hugues Azérad analyzes, "far from being an escape from reality, utopia is the tool of memory that remains, the indelible trace that enables an act of recomposition, weaving and blending" (2020, p. 430, my translation). In light of this, literature is a privileged site for utopian action, as stories are not only cultural artifacts but also political and epistemic tools that directly impact the (re)conceptualization of the world, the ways of making and inhabiting it, with direct implications at the ontological level. Certainly, our present on the brink of ecological collapse demands that we embrace radical ways of imagination that are visualized as "spaces of possibility", as "ontological, epistemological and methodological openings for (re)imagining and (re)connecting with increasingly vulnerable places, species, and relations" (Chao & Enari, 2021, p. 34).

This drive for new imaginative frameworks finds a compelling expression in Creole narratives, which become legible as an alternative project to what Gómez-Barris calls the extractive zone: the "colonial paradigm, worldview, and technologies that demarcate regions of 'high biodiversity' in order to reduce life to capitalist resource conversion" (Gómez-Barris, 2017, p. xvi). Franco-Creole literatures written since the middle of the last century, especially by women, combine these perspectives through ramified imaginaries whose ontological genesis, according to Glissant, is the slave trade: “the Antilleans are the site of a history made up of ruptures, whose beginning is a brutal uprooting: the trade” (1981, p. 233, my translation). These women thus open up to utopian spaces through their writing, configured as resistance, reverberation, and redress to the multiple violence they have suffered in their own territories-bodies (Cabnal, 2010) and those of their ancestors, for whom they now speak.[4]

Indeed, the literary and oraliterary[5] manifestations that have germinated in the Caribbean space for centuries have recognized to a greater extent the interdependencies between human and non-human beings. This is the case of *Bain de Lune*, where the binary relationship between subject and object is dissolved, as rivers, mountains, seas, winds, stars, trees, hurricanes, and rocks acquire in the narrative the condition of actants (Latour, 1999) that constantly produce effects at a systemic level on other forms of life and matter. In this way, human and non-human actants are irremediably involved in this dance of networks, assemblages (Bennett, 2010) that weave inextricable ties that sustain the plot of this novel and account for the sympoietic reality (Haraway, 2016) for the *jun pajal o’tanil*[6] or the *akapacha*[7]*.*

As we saw in the section on the critique of Western formulations of time as progressive and cumulative, any attempt to characterize the futuristic scope of *Bain de Lune* and related Caribbean narratives is complicated by the challenge of avoiding frameworks that assume teleological directionality and the consequent monopolized idea of future.

[4] The scope of these narratives and their translation and circulation in regard to climate crisis is to counteract the dominant climate imaginaries whose objectifying approach prevents an awareness of interconnection between the various forms of life. As Sophie Chao and Dion Enari mention, “the problem lies in the exclusionary scope of voices and beings heeded and represented by current dominant climate imaginaries–imaginaries that remain firmly anchored in, and perpetuate, the logic of human mastery over a “nature” recast as a passive, material substrate, meaningful only to the extent that it is useful to (certain) humans” (2021, p. 35).

[5] The concept of oraliture designates productions with an aesthetic purpose, created to be told and transmitted intergenerationally by oral means, based on a memorial textuality. It therefore encompasses various genres belonging to the oral tradition, such as tales, proverbs, songs, myths, riddles, etc. The term was first introduced and developed by Ernest Mirville (1974) in the French-speaking world and was subsequently taken up and expanded by the Creolists (see Chamoiseau & Confiant, 1991). It should be noted that this Creole oraliture arose in the slave-owning society, although its germ goes back to ancestral times in African societies, where the griots were in charge of safeguarding oral wisdom.

[6] *Tseltal* (ethnic group and language of the Mayan family, predominant in Chiapas, Mexico) way of understanding the interdependence and interrelation between human beings, mother-earth, higher beings and the cosmos.

[7] Aymara term that designates the vital space where Pachamama or Mother Earth resides, the space where humans, plants, animals, valleys, and everything that surrounds us coexist.

Nor could we necessarily describe it as Afrofuturisms or Afro-Caribbean futurisms in its most prevalent understanding referred to the black SciFi movements, mostly anchored in Afro-American coordinates and in which the intersection of the technological is commonplace, as well as a projection of life in later times. In fact, the novel under analysis covers much of the twentieth century and reaches the present day, offering past and present visions, since Cétoute, the character who anchors the narrative through his search and dying remembrance, speaks from a present devastated by hurricanes. Nonetheless, it does not entirely deviate from Ytasha L. Womack's definition of the genre, according to which "Afrofuturists redefine culture and notions of blackness for today and the future" by combining "elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-Western beliefs" (2013, p. 9). While it is true that Creole narratives do not take African origin as their sole center of identity, but recognize the rhizomatic diversity resulting from their multiple Amerindian, European and Asian heritages, as Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant proclaim in their *Éloge de la Créolité*: "Neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians, we proclaim ourselves Creoles" (1993, p. 13, my translation), so that, in any case, it would be more appropriate to speak of "Creole futurism" or, simply, "decolonial Caribbean futurism". Terms that encompass the proposals evoked by Suzanne Roussi-Césaire against the colonial, capitalist, and dualistic machinery of the Global North, which has denied the rhythms and intersystematicity of other peoples and species.

These and other Creole narratives are therefore not speculative fictions set in times to come but are anchored in ancestral Amerindian and Afro-descendant cosmogonies, in which magic, natural and supernatural elements coexist de facto—in past, present, and future temporalities. In this way, they seem to be shaped by the aforementioned Aymara concept of *qhipnayra* of past-future, since it is the past that enlightens us and to which we must look in order to orient ourselves and find a habitable horizon. A thought equally akin to Glissant's conception of utopia, which "is not projected into the future, but excavated in the hic et nunc of the advent of a radical otherness, of a period of rest and a leap out of history, which is not betrayal or reification, but the point of a new beginning and a genuine work of memory" (Azérad, 2020, p. 430).

Decolonial Eco-Epistemologies through *Bain de Lune*

Bain de Lune, by Yanick Lahens[8] (2014), tells the story of several generations of two family lines confronting each other over the course of a century in the small commune

[8] In addition to her literary work, Yanick Lahens has devoted much of her life to social commitment through associative, political, and educational activity in Haiti. Co-author of the reform that introduced the teaching of Creole in the first years of schooling (and that consecrated the official status of the language in the country, on the same level as French), director of a UNESCO program on the memory of slavery, holder of the Chaire Mondes

of Anse Bleue, "*village de tuf, de sel et d'eau adossé au pied de hautes montagnes d'Haïti*"[9] (p. 20), a village of peasants and fishermen where land and water merge. It is from this interstice between land and sea that the voice of Cétoute, the last member of the family line who speaks from the author's enunciative present, emerges. Lying on her sandy deathbed, after several days of hurricane and an event that will be revealed, she decides to devote her last hours to "*recoller ces morceaux épars" of her memory, "pareille à ces guirlandes d'algues détachées de tout et qui dansent affolées sur l'écume des vagues*"[10] (Lahens, 2014, p. 11). Thus begins this exercise of interiorization and search for the familiar identity rhizome, through which she proposes to "remonter toute la chaîne de (s)on existence…remettre au monde un à un (s)es aïeuls et aïeules"[11] (p.11).

Her voice, in the first person singular, is interspersed, discontinuously and through analepsis, with another collective voice, in the first person plural, which alternately reconstructs the vicissitudes of her ancestors. Hence, we go back to the beginning of the 20th century, with the first American occupation, to the origin of the Lafleur feud with the Mésidor, when the rich landowner Anastase Mésidor dispossessed Cétoute's great-great-grandfather, Bonal Lafleur, of his inherited lands, although the memorial and ritual presence of the "*franginen*"[12] ancestor, Dieunor, gives an account of the retrospective scope of the lineage, which dates back to the 18th century.

The two-voice narrative framework depicts the violent extractivist, accumulative, and patriarchal logics perpetuated by the Mésidor family through the generations. Thus, we see how Tertulien, son of Anastase, not content with owning the Lafleur lands, will seek to own Olmène, the young daughter of Orvil (granddaughter of Bonal) who finally agrees to this relationship only for the guarantee of subsistence that it implies. From this uncertain union between enemy communities will be born Dieudonné, future father of Cétoute, who will remain in the care of Olmène's family after she flees from Tertulien's violence. Through these private and collective stories, which give voice to the Haitian peasantry, Lahens makes family life converge with national life.

Anse Bleue thus becomes a mirror of the hardships of Haitian politics and society in the last century and early present: the American occupations, dictatorial politics, the arbitrariness of power, the excessive exploitation of people and land, the subjugation

francophones at the Collège de France, Lahens has always conveyed the critical perspective and Haitian social action through her literature. Masterfully interweaving the collective history of her country with intimate and situated memories, *Bain de Lune,* her fourth novel, won the 2014 Prix Fémina.

[9] [Village of tuff, salt, and water nestled at the foot of Haiti's high mountains] (my translation).

[10] [Reassemble the scattered pieces] of her memory, [like those garlands of seaweed detached from everything and dancing wildly on the foam of the waves] (my translation).

[11] [Retrace the entire chain of her existence...bring back to the world, one by one, her ancestors] (my translation).

[12] An individual born in Africa who survived the slave trade and the Haitian Revolution of 1804, according to the glossary that the author herself includes at the end of the book.

of women, and the culture of rape inherited from colonial violence that permeates the entire plot. In this way, we see embodied, sometimes anonymously and sometimes explicitly, many of the events and concrete political actors that have shattered the country: "*l'homme à chapeau noir et lunettes épaisses*"[13] as a clear reference to François Duvalier, the terror sown by the Tonton Macoute incarnated in the character of Fénelon (Olmène's brother), the uncontrolled deforestation by economic and political interests, natural disasters, etc. Underpinning this plot, natural and supernatural forces—the sea, the earth, the forests, the winds, the "land beneath the waters", home of divinities and ancestors—are presented as an omnipresent substratum, connecting in an indissoluble way the human becoming with the more-than-human.

Territory-Body-Land: Dispossession and De/Re-Territorialization

When speaking of "land" or "territory" in the Caribbean context, it is impossible to dissociate them from the spoliation, displacement, trafficking of beings, exploitation of the soil, and violent transplantation of human and non-human beings. In the face of these processes of dispossession provoked by colonial implantation and the consequent rupture of memory and identity, the need to give meaning to and construct a legitimate relationship with the land becomes both vital and conflictive. Glissant, in his *Poétique de la Relation*, summarizes this ontological conflict of "deterritorialization" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980) that structures Lahen's novel:

> The binding force of the sacred always leads us to seek out the first inhabitants of a territory…. This futile search was already cancelled out by the massacre of the Indians, which uprooted the sacred. As a result, the West Indies could not become a territory…. But what was a consequence of European expansion (the extermination of the pre-Columbians, the importation of new populations) is precisely what establishes a new relationship with the land: not the sacralized absolute of an ontological possession, but a relational complicity. (1990, pp. 160-161, my translation)

The relational complicity of which Glissant speaks, established between the wounded subjects and the spaces of deportation, equally battered by the colonial imprint, is what allows for the emergence of a bond of "reterritorialization." In Creole narratives, this relationship of reciprocity between nature and those who inhabit it, after a process of usurpation and transplantation, translates into a frequent mimesis of the characters

[13] [The man with a black hat and thick glasses] (my translation).

with nature. This identity reappropriation of the territory is not constructed, as Simasotchi-Bronès states, through the violence of a conquering gesture, but through a *lyannaj*, "a kind of tacit contract of give-and-take, between nature and the community that inhabits it. The latter acquires its legitimacy because, for it, what is at stake in the relationship being built is truly ontological, rather than exploitative" (2020, p. 284, my translation).

These dynamics are reflected in the historical experience of dispossession of the Lafleurs and their strategies of reterritorialization vis-à-vis the Mésidor, who "*avaient depuis toujours convoité la terre, les femmes et les biens*"[14] (Lahens, 2014, p. 21), embodying the most brutal forms of capitalist plunder and structural misogyny. In the earliest temporality to which the collective narrative provides access, located in 1920, it is revealed that the spoil of the Lafleur's land is directly linked to the extractivist activities of the U.S., which during the first occupation of Haiti, lasting almost two decades, expropriated or forcibly bought for a pittance many of the large estates that small peasant landowners had tended and cultivated "from father to son since our war of independence, when the great slave-holding estates were distributed among the peasants" (Hudicourt, 1922). Large landowners like the Mésidor family used their influence to take advantage of the situation:

> *Anastase Mésidor s'était déjà approprié les meilleures terres du plateau. Mais il en lorgnait d'autres pour les vendre à prix d'or aux aventuriers et francstireurs venus d'ailleurs, comme ceux de la United West Indies Corporation, qui, avec l'arrivée des Marines, s'étaient abattus sur l'île.*[15] (Lahens, 2014, p. 21)

As can be seen, Lahens does not hesitate to explicitly name those involved in the imperialist dynamic in Haiti, using acid irony to launch her anti-colonial and anti-class critique: "*persuadés qu'ils étaient que les grandes propriétés…feraient leur fortune et, du même coup, nous transformeraient enfin en paysans civilisés: chrétiens aux cheveux propres et peignés et portant des chaussures. Apprivoisés mais sans terres*"[16] (2014, pp. 21-22).

Faced with the dispossession of the family land, two main ways of reterritorialization could be established on the part of the Lafleur, which are in fact two sides of the same

[14] [had always coveted land, women and possessions] (my translation).
[15] [Anastase Mésidor had already taken possession of the best lands on the plateau. But he had his eyes on others, intending to sell them at exorbitant prices to adventurers and freebooters from elsewhere, like those of the United West Indies Corporation, who, with the arrival of the Marines, had descended upon the island] (my translation).
[16] [convinced as they were that large estates...would bring them fortune and, at the same time, would finally transform us into civilized peasants: Christians with clean, neatly combed hair and wearing shoes. Tamed, yet landless] (my translation).

coin: the connection with the more-than-human. On the one hand, the “natural” world, in a broad sense that encompasses not only every living being but also immeasurable elements and entities such as the sea, the wind, the stars, the mountains, and the forests; and on the other, the supernatural world, comprising the *lwas* (also called *Invisibles* or *Mystères*), divinities and spirits of Vodou, but also dead ancestors, with whom communication takes place through dreams. Indeed, the Lafleur have no possessions, but they have “*la réputation d’être inatteignables et porteurs de points*[17] puissants”[18] (2014, p. 22), a spiritual protection and a connection with *zilé anba dlo*, the underwater islands where the *lwas* dwell.

Thus, the first reterritorializing path for the Lafleur is through the "making body" of the earth: "*la terre, mon fils, c'est ton sang, ta chair, t'es os, tu m’entends*!"[19] (p. 22) This is the embodying the *territorio-cuerpo-tierra* [territory-body-land] dimension (Cabnal, 2010) of community feminism, according to which the defense of the female body and the protection of the land are intimately intertwined, since both the body and the land are victims of historical oppression and violence traversed by the same colonial-patriarchal axis:

> *Un léger vent frais lui entra par tous les pores, et sa chair et cette terre ne firent qu’un. Ce vent qui tourmentait les branches nous disait qu’elles avaient comme nous résisté à tout. Exposées à la poussière des saisons, à la corrosion du sel, au passage des ouragans, à la lente fermentation végétale, à la fureur des hommes, aux pluies torrentielles. Elles avaient résisté à tout.*[20] (Lahens, 2014, p. 177)

Thus, in order to “root themselves in the sacred,” or to rhizomize themselves following the horizontal and non-hierarchical image that Glissant takes from Deleuzian thought[21] (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980), the Lafleur wrap themselves in the arboreal to preserve their links with the earth, with the non-human, and with each other: “*nous étions les branches d’un même arbre, soudées au même tronc, et nous devions le rester*”[22] (Lahens, 2014, pp. 33-34). A recurring metaphor for community throughout *Bain de*

[17] Power given to someone by a *hougan* or a *mambo*, according to Lahens' translation.
[18] [the reputation of being unattainable and bearing powerful *points*] (my translation).
[19] [the land, my son, is your blood, your flesh, your bones. Do you hear me?] (my translation).
[20] [A light, cool wind entered through every pore, and her flesh and this land became one. This wind that tormented the branches told us that they, like us, had resisted everything. Exposed to the dust of the seasons, the corrosion of salt, the passage of hurricanes, the slow fermentation of plants, the fury of men, and torrential rains. They had resisted everything] (my translation).
[21] For further discussion on how Glissant’s rhizomatic philosophy informs Caribbean relational ontologies, see Jerez Columbié (2021), who addresses the cultural and ecological adaptability of mangroves as a metaphor for interconnected identities in the region. In this same vein, to further explore the application of these concepts to translation studies, see de la Fuente López (2020), where the mangrove and rhizome serve as conceptual tools to rethink the translation of hybrid identities and linguistic entanglements in Caribbean literature.
[22] [we were the branches of the same tree, welded to the same trunk, and we had to remain so] (my translation).

Lune, it also converges with community feminism's conception of community not as a geographical, economic, or political entity (Espericueta & de la Fuente López, 2020), but as "an inclusive principle that cares for life" (Paredes, 2014, p. 78).

The collective "nous" that guides us in the story shows the extent to which everything is structured around community, that choral voice rooted in the defense of a land martyred by human ambition and women's bodies that are victims of sexual extractivism. It is the voice of the dispossessed peasants, but also of the ancestors who lived through the trade and of all the beings and elements that inhabit and move this community, a chorus that becomes the symbol of all human and non-human communities whose sustainable way of life is threatened by the predatory and lineal logic of accumulation. A collective voice closely connected to the Lafleur family and which, as we have seen, seeks a different reterritorializing and rhizomizing path capable of creating community through Vodou:

> *Nous n'étions plus des hommes et des femmes séparés, dispersés, mais un unique corps qui tournait, tournait et tournait encore. Comme si la scansion régulière et inaltérée du tambour assòtòr nous avait fait un même cœur et que les autres tambours nous avaient confondus dans un même corps*.[23] (Lahens, 2014, p. 88)

More-than-Human Agency: Multisensory and Interspecies Imaginaries

"*Dans toute cette histoire, il faudra tenir compte du vent, du sel, de l'eau, et pas seulement des hommes et des femmes*"[24] (Lahens, 2014, p. 11). Cétoute's opening words make clear the centrality of non-human agency in the narrative. The non-human and spaces take part not as context but as characters in the plot in horizontal dialogue with humans and participants in the same agonizing tropical nature: "*la chaleur pesait déjà sur les sentiers menant au morne Peletier, engourdissant chrétiens-vivants, bêtes et plantes, faisant gémir jusqu'à la rocaille sur les chemins*"[25] (p. 45). As part of this reappropriation of the mutilated connection of the body to the earth in order to transform the relationship of domination over nature and over their own bodies, women acquire the protagonism of interspecies and inter-elemental connections, which is manifested through mimesis in the non-human and (multi)sensory language. As seen with the concept of territory-body, this conception offers a place of enunciation to

[23] [We were no longer men and women separated, scattered, but a single body that turned, turned, and turned again. As if the regular and unaltered rhythm of the *assòtòr* drum had made us one heart and the other drums had merged us into a single body] (my translation).
[24] [In this whole story, account must be taken of the wind, the salt, the water, and not just of men and women] (my translation).
[25] [the heat already weighed down on the paths leading to Morne Peletier, numbing living people, animals, and plants, making even the rocks along the paths groan] (my translation).

overthrow patriarchal and anthropocentric constructions of nature, far from the essentialisms of nature as something "feminine."

In this sense, Olmène and Cétoute, grandmother and granddaughter, despite not having met, are intimately connected on all levels: both have suffered patriarchal violence in their bodies at the hands of Mésidor, they have an identical physique, and they share a deep connection to the sea as an expansive element of their own bodies: "*À force d'eau, de sel et d'iode, mon corps s'est fait animal marin, et voilà que, dans ma légèreté, j'ai suivi la crête des vagues qui s'étirent avant de se retirer loin, très loin, jusqu'au plus profond de l'épaisseur des eaux*"[26] (p. 113). In addition to the constant mimesis with their element, the sea is on many occasions also their mediator to connect with their ancestors:

> *Un vent venant des montagnes agitait les vagues. Olmène regarda la mer, qui lui sembla respirer pareillement à une bête étendue sur le dos, agitée par le flux et le reflux du sang de toutes les créatures et des âmes, là, dans son flanc. Nan zilé anba dlo, dans l'île sous les eaux. Elle salua secrètement les Morts, les Ancêtres et les Mystères*.[27] (Lahens, 2014, p. 37)

There is a constant association between them, the sea, and the Vodou deities linked to the water, who preserve the memory of African ancestors and the horrors of slavery. As Cétoute narrates:

> *À tant examiner la mer, j'ai toujours cru que je finirais un jour par faire surgir au-dessus de l'écume toute la cohorte de ceux et celles qui dorment au creux de son ventre sur des lits d'algues et de coraux. Ceux et celles dans les chemins d'eau, leur route océane vers la lointaine Guinée avec Agwé, Simbi et Lasirenn qui les escortent. Mon père disait que toutes les voix des Ancêtres et des Morts, même de ceux venus dans les cales des navires il y a longtemps, soufflent encore dans la végétation marine, remontent parfois jusqu'à la surface des eaux comme des rumeurs mêlées à la nuit*.[28] (Lahens, 2014, p. 212)

[26] [Through water, salt, and iodine, my body became a marine animal, and here I am, in my lightness, following the crest of the waves that stretch before retreating far, very far, into the deepest thickness of the waters] (my translation).
[27] [A wind coming from the mountains stirred the waves. Olmène looked at the sea, which seemed to her to be breathing like a beast lying on its back, stirred by the ebb and flow of the blood of all creatures and souls, there, in its flank. *Nan zilé anba dlo*, in the island beneath the waters. She secretly greeted the Dead, the Ancestors, and the Mysteries] (my translation).
[28] [By examining the sea so much, I have always believed that one day I would make appear above the foam the entire cohort of those who sleep in the hollow of its belly on beds of seaweed and coral. Those in the water paths,

Creole imaginaries, in their imbrication with the more-than-human, challenge the perceptual matrices of hegemonic Western ocularcentrism.[29] Far from these logics, Caribbean cosmogonies, like many Amerindian conceptions, have not privileged sight over other senses in relating to the world, giving equal or greater value to auditory, tactile, or olfactory perceptions in relating to the non-human. Lahens' work, as a mirror of this, subverts the hegemonic sensoriality that, with the enthronement of sight, forgets the body and its connections with other senses and other, more-than-human, bodies. One perceives, then, an embodiment of sensory perceptions feeding also on the supranatural experiences of Vodou.

Specifically, the Lafleur's connection to the earth manifests itself in the action most often with the ear. This is seen, for example, in the preparation periods before the great sacrifices to the ancestors and the *lwas*, moments that often represent a before and after for the family, especially because of natural devastation or catastrophes: "*Orvil parla à peine cette semaine durant, dormit à même le sol, l'oreille contre la poitrine de la terre battue comme pour écouter le chuchotement de son cœur*"[30] (Lahens, 2014, p. 79). Thus, Creole narratives seek to transgress the typical monody of anthropocentrism, which only listens to itself by silencing the voices of other beings and non-human elements to make "*abstinence de parole*"[31] (p. 218). Instead, they make room for other voices: the earthly murmur, the chirping of a bird, the flow of a river, the crashing of waves on the seashore, the movement of leaves in the wind or their loud blowing, and the rustling of branches during hurricanes. These are, following Gómez-Barris, sound and listening practices that attempt to challenge the extractivist view, a "colonizing visual regime" (2017, p. 6).

This listening to the more-than-human, and in general multisensory perception, is again embodied in the two female protagonists of the narrative, Olmène and Cétoute. Both are particularly susceptible to natural sufferings, which reverberate in their own being embodying the territory-body-land dimension of community feminism: "*Elle aurait juré sur ce qu'elle avait de plus cher, sur Dieudonné, que la terre geignait. Et elle, Olmène, entendait ses plaintes*"[32] (Lahens, 2014, 122). Olmène hears not only

their oceanic route toward distant Guinea with Agwé, Simbi, and Lasirenn escorting them. My father used to say that all the voices of the Ancestors and the Dead, even those who came in the holds of ships long ago, still blow through the marine vegetation, sometimes rising to the surface of the waters like whispers mingled with the night"] (my translation).

[29] This prevalence of sight as a measure of modern science, truth, knowledge, and power has led to the increasingly close relationship between knowledge, visuality, and truthfulness that underlies modern Western Cartesianism (Jay, 2008).

[30] [Orvil barely spoke throughout the week, sleeping directly on the ground, his ear pressed against the chest of the packed earth as if to listen to the whisper of its heart] (my translation).

[31] [abstinence from speech] (my translation).

[32] [She would have sworn on what was dearest to her, on Dieudonné, that the earth was whining. And she, Olmène, could hear its moans] (my translation).

the groans of the earth but also those of the forest during hurricanes: "*elle entendit le bois gémir sous l'effet du vent et des gouttelettes de pluie*"[33] (p. 66).

Cétoute, in her deep connection with the sea, both source of life and her deathbed, as well as the site of the enunciation that triggers her narrative retrospection, places on equal footing the multiple senses with which she perceives it: "*je venais sur la grève regarder les vagues se faire et se défaire, respirer par tous les pores et m'imprégner d'iode et de varech, de ces senteurs âcres de la mer qui laissent à l'âme comme une étrange morsure*"[34] (p. 211). With equal avidity she welcomes with all her senses the sea breeze, despite being the origin of the hurricane that framed her end: "*même quand le nordé grondait des jours et des nuits d'affilée, j'écoutais à en être toute retournée, sa voix qui fracasse les rochers, je goûtais encore et encore son haleine salée sur mon visage*"[35] (p. 211).

This multisensory communication with beings and more-than-human elements brings us to another key point in the non-anthropocentric development of the story, which is the relevance of animal and interspecies language in the course of communal life. There is a de-hierarchization between species and an enhancement of all beings and climatological elements in the symbiotic becoming of the earth: "*Derrière elles, les perroquets venus des montagnes lointaines criaillaient, annonçant l'imminence de pluies. À l'horizon, le globe rouge du soleil déclinait dans les piaillements d'oiseaux aquatiques.… Anse Bleue somnolait déjà*"[36] (p. 57) There are hundreds of examples in the text in which natural elements are endowed with anthropomorphic characteristics, serving as preventive or premonitory spokesbeings of vital events in human and non-human lives: "*Il y avait dans la main rugueuse du vent, dans la morsure du soleil, dans le ventre des eaux, comme un orage qui s'annonçait*"[37] (p. 63).

In this sense, one of the key lines of the proposed translatological analysis consists precisely in the identification—and subsequent preservation or amplification—of the linguistic mechanisms used by the author to subvert the usual anthropocentric hierarchies. The agency granted to the non-human is materialized in the syntax of the

[33] [she heard the wood moan under the effect of the wind and the droplets of rain] (my translation).
[34] [I would come to the shore to watch the waves form and unravel, to breathe through every pore and soak in the iodine and seaweed, those acrid scents of the sea that leave on the soul a strange kind of bite] (my translation).
[35] [even when the *nordé* rumbled for days and nights on end, I listened until I was completely shaken, to its voice crashing against the rocks, and I savored again and again its salty breath on my face] (my translation).
[36] [Behind them, parrots from the distant mountains squawked, announcing the imminent arrival of rain. On the horizon, the red globe of the sun was sinking amid the chirping of water birds.… Anse Bleue was already dozing] (my translation).
[37] [There was, in the rough hand of the wind, in the bite of the sun, in the belly of the waters, a storm in the making] (my translation).

text, where natural and meteorological elements and phenomena appear as subjects of actions:

> *L'aube dissout lentement les lourds nuages, sombres comme un deuil, qui noyaient le ciel depuis bientôt trois jours. Une très douce lumière voile enfin le monde. Reflets de nacre rosée, presque orange par endroits, qui effleurent ma peau lacérée, mes plaies ouvertes, et m'atteignent jusqu'aux os*.[38] (Lahens, 2014, p. 77)

The dynamic of domination between humans and more-than-human nature is thus inverted, since the human characters, although many of them are "owners" of land, the novel being a portrait of the Haitian peasantry, do not exercise power over nature but are at its mercy. It is the natural elements that have the capacity and the power of decision to provide them with sustenance or not: "*Plus question de remettre a plus tard sous prétexte que la terre ne donnait plus. Que la mer hésitait à les nourrir*"[39] (p. 79). Therefore, all elements of this interconnected community must learn to coexist, so that humans, contrary to anthropocentric paradigms, are aware of their vulnerability to other elements:

> *Ce grand pays liquide, pouvait pourtant à tout instant l'avaler dans son ventre immense, silencieux, féroce. Tantôt végétal, clair et si rassurant, le monde vers lequel elle s'acheminait pouvait aussi sans crier gare la tourner, la figer et la retourner dans ses descentes d'eau, ses orages et ses falaises*.[40] (Lahens, 2014, pp. 45-46)

The link between the characters and natural catastrophes, specifically hurricanes, runs through the whole work, Haiti being one of the most vulnerable spaces in the world to them—the most vulnerable country in Latin America and the Caribbean and the eleventh worldwide (INFORM, 2024). This reality inserted into the tropical space irrevocably marks the becoming of all living beings, becoming even a measure of time, since hurricanes serve to structure lives: "*l'après-midi d'une veille d'ouragan*"[41] (p. 32); "*il fallait profiter de ce moment entre deux ouragans*"[42] (p. 79). In the case of humans, it seems that these temporalities of shelter encourage an ancestral connection, a

[38] [The dawn slowly dissolves the heavy clouds, dark like mourning, that have been drowning the sky for nearly three days. A very soft light finally veils the world. Pearly reflections, almost orange in places, brush my torn skin, my open wounds, and reach me down to my bones] (my translation).
[39] [No longer was it a question of postponing under the pretext that the earth no longer gave. That the sea hesitated to feed them] (my translation).
[40] [This vast liquid land could at any moment swallow her into its immense, silent, fierce belly. Sometimes vegetal, clear, and so reassuring, the world toward which she was heading could also, without warning, turn her, freeze her, and toss her about in its descents of water, its storms, and its cliffs] (my translation).
[41] [the afternoon of a hurricane's eve] (my translation).
[42] [it was necessary to take advantage of this moment between two hurricanes] (my translation).

communal gathering in which links with the past and with rituals are generated, favoring the analysis of dreams or oraliture. Nature demands a disruption of the rhythms of the Capitalocene, proposing a pause that breaks the productivist cycle and urges Caribbean communities to look toward the past-future:

> *Ce furent trois longues journées ennuyeuses d'attente…à raconter les rêves, à leur trouver un sens. À ressasser le temps d'avant, le temps-longtemps…. Trois longues journées de palabres traversées de silences pour parler aux dieux. De rires à nous faire plier en deux pour tromper le grondement de la faim dans nos flancs*.[43] (Lahens, 2014, p. 67)

Crisis and Utopian Strategies: Memory and Degrowth

Despite the many communitarian articulations emanating from the narrative, there is a sense of powerlessness in the face of ecological collapse and the increasing tearing of the non-human, in the face of which spiritual protection proves insufficient for the Lafleur:

> *Mais Orvil, tout danti fût-il, ne put rien contre les premières blessures ouvertes d'où fusa le sang de la terre. Contre les premières cicatrices qui saillirent les flancs des mornes. Contre les rivières exsangues qui maigrissaient…. Contre la terre et la rocaille qui encombraient le pied des versants à mesure que nous les défrichions. Contre la montée en puissance des ouragans. Contre la sécheresse chaque fois plus dévastatrice qui lui succédait. Contre le désamour de nos jardins à mesure qu'on nous abandonnait. Contre la grande scierie de Tofik Békri qui accéléra l'abattage des arbres et détruisit les barrières naturelles. Contre la vente de nos terres qui rapetissaient, jusqu'à faire de nous de chers maîtres et chères maîtresses de peaux de chagrin*.[44] (Lahens, 2014, p. 35, p.145)

[43] [They were three long, tedious days of waiting... spent recounting dreams, searching for their meaning. Revisiting the time before, the long-ago time... Three long days of talk, woven with silences to speak to the gods. Of laughter that bent us in two, to drown out the rumbling of hunger in our sides] (my translation).

[44] [But Orvil, *danti* as he was, could do nothing against the first open wounds from which the earth's blood gushed forth. Against the first scars that rose on the flanks of the *mornes*. Against the bloodless rivers that withered away…. Against the earth and the rocks cluttering the foothills as we cleared them. Against the growing power of the hurricanes. Against the ever more devastating droughts that followed. Against the fading love of our croplands as we were abandoned. Against Tofik Békri's great sawmill, which hastened the felling of trees and destroyed natural barriers. Against the selling of our lands, shrinking ever smaller, until we became the dear masters and mistresses of vanishing scraps of earth] (my translation).

An aura of fatality is thus perceived as the plot progresses and the environmental consequences of the US occupations and dictatorial state policies become more and more visible, each time sold to new economic interests, renewing extractivist forms to suit the times (e.g., coca cultivation and trade, intensive monoculture, massive deforestation, eradication of local livestock species, and introduction of foreign ones). However, far from falling into inertial stagnation, a direct causal link is established between the rupture of the "branches" of the community due to ambition as opposed to life in common, and the free fall of ecological symbiosis:

> *Contre ceux qui parlaient, se détachant de l'arbre pour une raison qui n'était pas l'ambition, mais qui lui ressemblait beaucoup. Orvil ne peut rien contre ces événements qui ne semblaient vouloir tracer, droit, tout droit, que le chemin à sens unique et sans retour de la fatalité*.[45] (Lahens, 2014, p. 35)

In fact, the Lafleur do not entirely escape this cult of modern productive forms, for, as Cusicanqui notes, "the developmentalist idea acts as a talisman…. Development is such a normal and desirable idea that it renders indifferent the liquidation of viable forms of community, even those that allow us to face climatic crises…with our own resources" (2018, p. 20, my translation). Therefore, some members of the Lafleur family dissociate themselves from community, seduced by the developmentalist phantom when, for example, they aspire to own other lands or other trades on the market, or when they see in the US "modernization" that Leosthène (Olmène's brother who emigrated and made his fortune in the US) shows them, a desirable future.

Faced with the "internalization of ideas and practices that dissolve the communal fabrics of life" (Cusicanqui, 2018, p. 12) and prevent a sustainable link with the non-human, Abner, Cétoute's brother, responds by turning developmentalist discourse on its head and ironically naming the longed-for development: "*Si vous coupez les arbres, pas de développement. Si vous plantez dans les terres de café des haricots, la terre va s'en aller et pas de développement. Si vous déféquez dans les rivières, pas de développement*"[46] (Lahens, 2014, p. 225). It is in this character that the futuristic propositional aspect of *Bain de Lune* is more strongly concentrated, oriented towards horizons of degrowth and in direct opposition to the savage forms of local extractivism, demystifying the discourse of the Western linearity of "progress" and accumulation. With this impulse, Abner tries to gradually introduce solutions through collective

[45] [Against those who spoke, breaking away from the tree for a reason that was not ambition, yet bore a striking resemblance to it. Orvil could do nothing against these events, which seemed intent on carving, straight, ever so straight, the one-way road of fate, with no way back] (my translation).
[46] [If you cut down the trees, no development. If you plant beans in the coffee lands, the soil will wash away and no development. If you defecate in the rivers, no development] (my translation).

organization, such as the *coumbite*, in Anse Bleue: "*il creusa un puits, essaya des semences et organisa une coopérative*"[47] (p. 225).

At the same time, another mobilizing force in the construction of transmodern decolonial utopias is based on that detection of cracks urged by Glissant, thus conceiving utopia as a tool of memory that makes possible the repair, stitching, and mending of fissures: another possible interpretation of the Andean *qhipnayra* mentioned above. This exercise of memory, mostly matrilineal in the Caribbean, consists in naming the wounds through collective narration, where women become transmitters of the oral word of the ancestors, *griottes*—guardians of botanical, agro-ecological, and medicinal knowledge that must not be lost if we aspire to habitable horizons:

> *Parler pour arracher à la nuit ces mots qui n'appartiennent qu'à elles…. Olmène aimait ces voix qui semblaient sortir d'un seul et grand corps d'ombre. D'une unique bouche…. Elles se relayèrent sans faiblir, enchaînant une histoire après l'autre…. Celles des jardins, où elles s'esquintaient à faire pousser légumes, petit mil et maïs. Celles du jardin le plus précieux, qu'elles, les femmes, gardaient là, lové entre leurs hanches, et qui n'appartenait qu'à elles.*[48] (Lahens, 2014, p. 51).

In turn, the author also becomes a transmitter who keeps alive, in the present, Caribbean women's memory and genealogy, showcasing an admirable mastery in conveying this oral tradition of Creole through a written language that superficially appears to be French. However, a critical translational perspective enables detecting that this is a process of de/reterritorialization and ideological and cultural reappropriation of this dominant language. Lahens uses various mechanisms to insert the minorized language, Creole, into her discourse, resulting in a new hybrid language. This use is not merely an introduction of Creole vocabulary, but rather, a structural, orthotypographic, epistemological, and cultural manipulation of the hegemonic language—ultimately forming a unique Franco-Creole translingual text. This interweaving of both languages at all levels constitutes an essential part of the author's ethical and aesthetic project of resistance, and it presents the greatest translational challenges, since a gaze oblivious to the power games that underlie the author's translingual use would easily fall into a homogenization and domestication that reinforces hegemonies.

[47] [he dug a well, tried seeds, and organized a cooperative] (my translation).
[48] [Speaking to tear from the night those words that belong only to them.... Olmène loved these voices that seemed to come from one single, great body of shadow. From a single mouth.... They took turns without weakening, linking one story after another.... Those of the gardens, where they labored to grow vegetables, millet, and corn. Those of the most precious garden, which they, the women, kept there, nestled between their hips, and which belonged only to them] (my translation).

Finally, in addition to the character of Abner, the proposals for change and the utopian spirit of the novel are embodied by a character whose appearance is fleeting, for no sooner does he set foot in Anse Bleue, than he is cruelly murdered by Tertulien and his associates. We only have access to his revolutionary thought through a letter found by the Lafleur, who for a few hours had sheltered this stranger who personifies the active anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist resistance. He left a message of appeal to the collective struggle here and now, because, as the Andean cosmovision urges, it is necessary to look to the past in order to orient oneself in the present and to search for utopia, since we are walking with our backs to the future: "*comme le dit le proverbe de chez nous, **'Jodi pa demen'**, nous devons nous préparer au pire pour tracer la voie d'un meilleur lumineux*"[49] (Lahens, 2014, p. 154). A glimmer of hope that can only be realized through the union of Abyayalan resistances:

> *L'ardeur que j'ai toujours mise aux études, je l'emploie à vivre chaque seconde avec l'intime conviction que la bonté peut être de ce monde et que certains sont appelés à pétrir la pâte qui fera lever le pain de demain. Aucun sacrifice n'est trop grand pour un tel rêve. Ce rêve, je le partage avec d'autres hommes et d'autres femmes qui se battent dans la cordillère des Andes et aux quatre coins du monde…. Je pars tout simplement comme tant d'autres, comme le Che dont vous avez certainement entendu parler, à la recherche d'une étoile qui n'est pas aux antipodes de la raison mais qui est la raison même*.[50] (Lahens, 2014, pp. 154-155)

Translation as a de/re-Territorializing Tool

In a space where language is permeated by the colonial wound, narrating is a political act, and so is framing translation as a tool, be it inter/translinguistic, intersemiotic, interepistemic, or interspecies, among many other translational variables. Thus, beyond a strictly philological reading of the text, this paper is based on a translatological approach, conceived as a tool for epistemic articulation and intersectional and horizontal hermeneutics. What I have but briefly outlined in this analysis falls within a sort of decolonial "contrapuntal reading" (Said, 1993), which allows us to detect the tensions between colonizing and colonized language, between

[49] [as the local saying goes, 'today, not tomorrow', we need to prepare for the worst to pave the way for a brighter future] (my translation).
[50] [The passion I have always put into my studies, I now use to live every second with the firm conviction that goodness can exist in this world and that some are called to knead the dough that will rise into the bread of tomorrow. No sacrifice is too great for such a dream. This dream, I share with other men and women who fight in the Andes and in all corners of the world.... I simply leave, like so many others, like Che, whom you have certainly heard of, in search of a star that is not at the antipodes of reason but is reason itself] (my translation).

dominant and invisibilized temperate Western epistemological systems, the dynamics of power according to gender, ethnicity, class, rural or urban environment, and the multiple entanglements that transcend any dualistic approach. The translatological angle offers other perspectives of interaction with discursive levels and authorial aspirations. It enables us to dive into the tropical mnemonic substrates of the text and to carry out an intersectional reading that allows us to bring to solid ground each thread of the warp that makes up the story, the ideological framework, and its strategies of resistance.

In this sense, the very circulation of these chronotropic imaginaries within literary, cultural, academic, and activist spheres already situates itself within a decolonial translation project. Thus, to strengthen precisely the "sympoietic" task and the joint becoming of human and more-than-human linkages, I advocate for an ecotranslation that fosters epistemic and ecosystemic ecologies, rearticulates communitarian practices to counter predatory individualism, and challenges the univocal Western imposition of time and senses. I therefore depart from more flexible approaches to translation in which it can be articulated as a nomadic concept, but above all, as a tool nourished by decolonial theories and methodologies—to which the present paper intends to contribute—and by ideological (Tymoczko, 2006) and transnational feminist approaches (Brufau Alvira, 2009, Álvarez & de Lima Costa, 2014, Castro & Spoturno, 2020).

If, in addition, we face the editorial task of making these texts travel to other linguistic coordinates, some methodological principles to align with the objective of ecotranslation would involve ethical and aesthetic amplification of linguistic mechanisms that the author uses both to subvert anthropocentric hierarchies and to promote interspecies and multisensory dialogues, as well as to deterritorialize French through Creole. To this end, I believe that what should guide the translator is the "right to opacity" (Glissant, 1996), to avoid reducing the ontologies and epistemologies they engage with to the model of their own transparency. That is, not to attempt to grasp something that does not belong to their hermeneutic horizon or cannot be apprehended with the preconceived and standard tools of hegemonic truth. In this case study, in addition to preserving the linguistic-cultural opacity of Creole, and deciding when not to translate or how to prevent the erasure of the mechanisms of resistance in the target text, it is about including the voices of ecosystems, animals, and (super)natural forces, which are not easily translated into human or logical terms, but which possess a legitimate form of expression and communication.

Furthermore, the relevance of translation as a tool in this research is also framed by other objectives, such as the exercise of "femealogy" (Cabnal, 2010, p. 24), the circulation of ancestral and natural knowledge, or the revival of debates on coloniality,

slavery, and extractivism in other coordinates. In this way, the interest of the translatological approach is not only to *alumbrar*, in the sense of accompanying with light (rather than illuminate) those who traverse the darkest areas of the broad spectrum of concealment and shadows—marginal authors who, in turn, give voice to women, lands, and more-than-human entities that are anonymous and excluded from official history—but also to propose other epistemic cartographies and pan-Caribbean alliances.

Indeed, one of the translation tools I propose is based on this pan-Caribbeanism, a utopian aspiration closely related to Glissant's archipelagic thought and Benítez Rojo's "repeating island" (1998), since it advocates overcoming linguistic and geopolitical barriers to connect with what is common to the various Caribbean spaces, focusing, in this case, on the Hispanic Caribbean and the French-Creole-speaking Caribbean—extendable, of course, to the rest of the linguistic areas that make up the space resulting from imperialist expansions. This "intracultural translation" (de la Fuente López, 2021, p. 279) makes it possible to bring to the surface inter-Caribbean alliances in terms of ecological issues, struggles against extractivism and socio-environmental conflicts, oraliture and shared collective imaginary, ancestral knowledge, medicinal botanical uses or religious beliefs and their link with the more-than-human, all with an African and Amerindian substrate, as is the case of Haitian Vodou,[51] Quimbois,[52] or Santería in Cuba.

In line with intraculturality, and always starting from a situated position that avoids falling into poorly defined third spaces, among the strategies proposed I emphasize the need not to conceive translation as an isolated practice. On the contrary, it is essential to promote collective networking practices with people from communities at the forefront of resistance to extractivist projects, experts in Caribbean agroecology, natural medicine, and so on. Accordingly, in order to build this ecotranslation, we must integrate into the very practice of translation the questioning and reconfiguration of temporalities that have underpinned this paper. In fact, it is also possible to alter the rhythms of the translational process and its linear directionality, disrupting the dichotomies between source and target text, and shifting towards other phases where knowledge is jointly constructed: the selection of works, the decision to contribute to the construction of counterhegemonic genealogies, the intersectional analysis illustrated here, or the documentation phase. Yanick Lahens herself, during the documentation of this novel, highlighted in several interviews the extensive collective work of exchange and consultation carried out with historians, anthropologists,

[51] For a deeper understanding of these African-rooted religions and a critical background on Vodou, see Eric Montgomery's *Gothic "Voodoo" in Africa and Haiti* (2019).

[52] *kenbwa/tjenbwa/tchenbwa* in Guadeloupean, Martinican, and Guianese Creole, respectively.

sociologists, and "voudouisants", among others (Librairie Mollat, 2014). It is therefore something common between the writing and translating exercise: an essential ethical practice in the interest of not appropriating the voice of others and of maintaining a genuine epistemic dialogue.

In this sense, the difference between a scientistic translatological approach and a decolonial and feminist one is very noticeable in this documentation phase. The translation of plant elements, for instance, so frequent in the narratives analyzed, should be done according to the land of origin and their medicinal and ancestral uses in the different regions of the Caribbean, instead of imposing Eurocentric equivalences that threaten biodiversity. In this case, it is obviously very useful to have botanical manuals at hand, but most of the relevant knowledge in community agroecology, natural medicine, and spirituality is transmitted orally in a matrilineal way. Networking with women in these communities is therefore essential. This is why I advocate translation as a tool integrated with other practices of collective work and community resistance, such as those alluded to in the novel itself: Caribbean *koudmen* and *coumbite*, *tekio* in Mexico, or the Andean *mink'a*, all forms of creating and organizing collective spaces and projects where knowledge and resources are shared for the benefit of the human and more-than-human community.[53]

Conclusion

Conceiving the diverse Caribbean spaces as a relational totality at the ecological, epistemic, historical-colonial, and literary levels contributes to a more effective articulation of counter-hegemonic struggles and to a shared imagination in building habitable futures, as the intracultural and networked perspective demands. This opens up pathways that allow translation to weave closer ties between the temporal, agroecological, and communal conceptions of Caribbean and Abya Yala—specifically Andean—spaces, which I have sought to bring into dialogue here and which the novel itself seems to intuit. It is only from these cartographies and from places of enunciation such as pluriversalism, transmodernity, and the decolonial utopian-poetic vision of Suzanne Roussi-Césaire that we can understand the gears of the colonial-patriarchal pattern of power that continues to drink from the same Western hierarchies and fictions.

[53] In this way, the translational process could be encouraged and inscribed in transdisciplinary projects that follow on from TRAMILJ, for example, an inter-Caribbean project of applied research on the traditional medicine of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and other Caribbean islands, aimed at "a better understanding and complementarity between institutional medicine and popular therapies" (1984, 7) and bringing together ethnologists, botanists, pharmacologists, physicians, and farmers. A support network that must necessarily have a pan-Caribbean intracultural approach in order to analyze the convergences of use in the different countries and regions of the Caribbean basin.

A decolonial approach to translation allows us to look inward to think outward, impels us to a coalition of knowledge, and emphasizes the importance of the act of narration in the reconstruction and transmission of interspecies collective becomings in an increasingly asymmetrical and agonizing world. A narrative in which plants, animals, seas, rivers, stars, mountains, and forests are subjects of knowledge, not just objects, and in which temporalities and sensibilities that have been fractured by anthropocentric and extractivist Western hegemony are recovered. And perhaps, in order to rethink our relationships with life systems, we must also redefine the very idea of futurity and synchronize our rhythms with those of other forms of life.

As outlined in this paper, Caribbean texts such as *Bain de Lune* give rise to other possible tomorrows, as they provide the substrate from which to germinate new ways of telling stories about ourselves, of dignified lives, and habitable territories full of shared knowledges and links, focusing on the interdependence and vulnerability of the human and the non-human, in opposition to an autonomous, competitive, and instrumentalizing neoliberal model. They respond to the urgency of raising imaginaries of degrowth and stand as counter-discourses against the predatory developmentalism leading us to collapse. In turn, this invites us to abandon blind allegiance to the Western temperate clock and to embrace discontinuity, cycles, and interruptions that tropical natural systems demand.

Following these traces sketched along the way, translation collects and propagates seeds that words, inhabited by multiple languages and by body-territories whose wounds are pierced by the same colonial/patriarchal disruptive axis, have rescued. Thus, it brings to the surface voices that emerge from the underground, re-signifying the stripped space, voices like those of Cétoute and Olmène, who, in narrating, feel more than ever that they belong “à ces femmes des quatre chemins. Ouvertes à tous les vents... Femmes à la parole en lambeaux. Une force est endormie dans le balancement de leurs hanches, dans leur voix aussi. Comme par-dessous l’humus, une nappe d’eau vive, une source de feu”[54] (Lahens, 2014, p. 55). A sororal force capable of renewing the rupture of the connection with the earth and its co-inhabitants.

This humus from which renewal emerges is nothing other than the fermentation of what colonial dynamics, the slave trade, and the plantation system have caused, without expecting that from that spilled blood other dawns would sprout forth. Although sometimes words are not enough, as proclaimed by the Spanish writer María Sánchez (2024), on the land we can also write letters for other futures, other possible days in which we will become, for others, kind and good shadows.

[54] [To these women from all paths. Open to all winds... Women with torn speech. A force lies dormant in the sway of their hips, in their voices as well. Like beneath the humus, a layer of living water, a source of fire] (my translation).

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