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TRACING THE LINEAGES OF DECOLONIAL THINKING THROUGH LATINX FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

Thinking De<=>coloniality through Haitian Indigenous Ecologies

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Abstract

I write this essay from a place of thirst, discontent, dream; from being housed in the United States but not at home there; from thinking through this writing in English, a language that is not home; and from wanting to continue making a place that is not home. I think through this inquiry from a place of cohabitation with Western ways of knowing that have purposefully demonized peoples of African descent as less than human; from the tradition of Haitian thinkers and resurgents who emphasize spirituality as crucial to recreating themselves endlessly; and from imagining the unseen, unfelt, and invisible powers that illuminate the process. In this place of feverishness, I sit with Haitian writer and singer Mimerose Beaubrun's monograph Nan Dòmi in order to consider the possibilities and impossibilities that might be realized through a practice of decolonial labor that bridges the known and the unknown, the seen and the unseen, the metaphysical and the material. Taking inspiration from María Lugones's phenomenological approach of decoloniality and Beaubrun's theory of nan dòmi (dream/ing), this essay asks: what in Beaubrun's Nan Dòmi opens decoloniality as a radical onto-epistemological terrain from which to rethink subjectivities, politics, and worlds in uneven and unjust geographies?

> When I think of my own people, the only people I can think of as my own are transitionals, liminals, border-dwellers, world-travelers, beings in the middle of either/or.
>
> —María Lugones, Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes

> I truly believe there are magnetic forces of the universe which pull people and places together in intentional, meaningful ways.
>
> —Patricia Harlan-Marks, in discussion with the author

> We do not have bodies, we are our bodies, and we are ourselves while being in the world.
>
> —Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Woman, Native, Other*

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Context and Problematic

In 2010, Haitian musician and anthropologist Mimerose Beaubrun published *Nan Dòmi: Le re´cit d'une initiation vodou.* Earlier the same year, a magnitude 7.0 earthquake had struck Haiti, leaving more than 316,000 dead or missing, 300,000 injured, and over 1.3 million homeless. Beaubrun's project began a few decades prior to the publication of *Nan Dòmi*. Then, as a student in ethnology and anthropology studies in Haiti, Beaubrun sought to study the Haitian Lakou from the perspective of these disciplinary fields of knowledge: "And I set out to visit different Lakous in order to better understand their inhabitants' way of life. In this sense, I was bound to be a participant—I lived in a Lakou—and thus was in a position to render an account of what I had seen and understood, a sense of what I had experienced" (Beaubrun 2013, 31).

Although the earthquake and its aftermath are no longer at the center of the world's everyday news and television dramas, Beaubrun's monograph, to a large extent, carries the idea that the missing, unseen, and misunderstood in the wake of the earthquake are vivid exemplars of features of Haitian life that predated that particular tragedy; they are the "uninhabitable" (to borrow from Katherine McKittrick) that shapes and is part of the environment Haitians inhabit (McKittrick 2013, 6). This essay sits with Beaubrun's engagement with the Haitian Lakou as a theoretico-practical project that opens up a spatial indeterminacy between the living and the buried, between the seen and the unseen, between the known and the unknown, between the past and the present. It invites the reader to envision decoloniality as being and becoming with; as a thirst to move along the world's multiple tremors.[1]

Traditionally, the Lakou figures in Haiti's stories of resistance as a living arrangement developed by former slaves in St. Domingue (the former French colony that became Haiti after the successful 1804 slave revolt) in opposition to the plantation system. It emerged as a space of resistance, an environment in which former slaves aspired to establish economic equality and self-sufficiency (Merilus 2015, 36). Following the 1804 Haitian Revolution, the Lakou would evolve into clusters of dwellings in which Haitian families reside, as well as the extended and multiple-generation family form that is prominent in Haitian culture. Members of the Lakou work cooperatively and provide for one another with financial and multiple other forms of support in the context of Haitian state violence and the exploitation and dispossession of Haitian peasants (Bastien 1961; Edmond, Randolph, and Richard 2007, 19–20).

The Haitian Revolution also resulted in pressures on the new nation to enter the global economy through multilateral adjustment programs and development projects embedded within spiritually inflicted capitalist-catholic-protestant (neo)colonial registers, and these pressures shaped several aspects of the Lakou in post-slavery Haiti. Scholars of Haitian studies emphasize: a) the isolation of Haiti and the imposition of trade boycotts and embargoes by France and the United States following the revolution; b) a political culture based on the use of military force; c) the 1915–1934 United States occupation inscribing on Haiti's social fabric the logic of colonial and neocolonial power relations leading to; d) sabotaging Haitians' ability to shape their destiny (Etienne 1997 Farmer 2004; 2006; Michel and Bellegarde-Smith 2006).[2] These pressures and interventions have constituted the material resources and provided the dominant frameworks that would structure living conditions in Haiti after independence, enabling a country to be understood within the terms set by neoliberal projects: a pained body, a site of endemic violence and monstrous poverty, or from the words of the 45th president of the United States, a shithole. About the 2010 earthquake tragedy, Haitian American

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scholar Charlene De´sir asserts that the earthquake was a profound wound for Haitian people, but only the most recent one, emphasizing the long line of equally devastating interventions that came before and after the earthquake and that are linked to it (De´sir 2011, 278).

I engage with Beaubrun's *Nan Dòmi* in the wake of the Trump administration's ordering the nonrenewal of Temporary Protection Status (TPS), an immigration status that has allowed me and my two kids, along with 50,000 other Haitians, to stay in the US after the 2010 earthquake; in the wake of renewed interest in investigating the potential and viability of Haiti's Lakou system in the aftermath of the earthquake;[3] in the wake of iterative acts of violence that haunt people of African descent despite their ceaseless struggles for liberation and social justice; in the wake of countless unseen, uncounted, missing, and unacknowledged intermeshed terrors and politics. De´sir's reading of the 2010 tragedy and Beaubrun's *Nan Dòmi* force us to take notice of the manner in which Haiti stands in times of reconfiguration of long-standing patterns and processes rooted in colonialism.

From the Haitian Kreyòl, *nan dòmi* means dream/ing or a state of sleeping. *Nan dòmi* also translates in Beaubrun's project as a second or multiple level/s of attention. The monograph, which was translated into English by D. J. Walker in 2013, gives an entrance into Beaubrun's bodily engagement with the Lakou: an ethical, ontological, and epistemological development that situates Beaubrun within the complexity of Haitian indigenous worlds. *Nan dòmi* as a concept also echoes Hortense Spillers's writing: "In order for me to speak a truer word concerning myself, I must strip down through layers of attenuated meanings, made an excess in time, over time, assigned by a particular historical order, and there await whatever marvels of my own inventiveness" (Spillers 1987, 65).

Indeed, a series of interlocking logics originating from slavery and carried through modern politics and socioeconomic arrangements brings into sharp focus how colonial logics of dispossession continue to shape lives while at the same time opening the possibility of dreaming, reinventing, and resisting. McKittrick puts forth the notion of "plantation futures" to emphasize how painful racial histories hold in them the possibility of organizing and imagining collective futures differently (McKittrick 2013, 2). María Lugones also theorizes (the) social [reality(ies), world(s)] as multiple and "infra-politically" charged, to underline the liberatory possibilities they hold. "Infra-politics," Lugones asserts, shows the power of communities of people in constituting resistant meanings and one another against the constitution of meanings and social organization by power. Rather than in a politics of the public, "infra-politics" marks the turn inward, in a politics of resistance toward liberation (Lugones 2010, 746). The ongoing political economy of dispossession in post-slavery Haiti, and the resistance against it, provide the context (but not exclusively) in which Beaubrun offers *Nan Dòmi* and my embracing it as a TPS-holder, a non-English speaker, a native of a shithole country, to ask: what in Beaubrun's *Nan Dòmi* opens decoloniality as a radical, onto-epistemological terrain from which to engage with possible liberatory futures in uneven and unjust geographies?

Working with the writings of Beaubrun and drawing from Lugones, McKittrick, Trinh T. Minh Ha, and Diana Coole, among others, and grounding the theoretical in the intimate, this discussion imagines a decolonial vision, from the Lakou, that returns to the world's (worlds') complexity and multiplicity. In doing so, I recenter spirituality as a key element in the construction of subjectivity, underscoring the importance of what Dian Million calls a "felt analysis" from which to displace easily seeable and knowable parameters that order and feed the categorial logics of a politics of the public

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(Million 2009, 54). Imagining decoloniality as a theoretico-practical project corresponds to a dreaming of things (not/yet/necessarily) seen and unseen, felt and unfelt, known and unknown that takes up the social and its webs of relationships, materiality, agency, and politics as infra-politically and multiply charged.[4]

Dreaming the De<=>colonial

The contribution of feminist philosopher María Lugones to the study of decoloniality and to the development of decolonial thought is a key highlight of this engagement with Beaubrun. A striking point that grounds Lugones's vision of decoloniality is developed at great length in her article "Toward a Decolonial Feminism." Lugones writes: "I understand the dichotomous hierarchy between the human and the nonhuman as the central dichotomy of colonial modernity" (Lugones 2010, 743). Lugones's assertion is a good point to enter into and challenge traditional approaches of decolonial praxis. The world, as Edouard Glissant theorizes it, an "inextricable mass of elements that are in contact with one another in the tout-monde" (multiple worlds in relation), in relation to the earth, to living and nonliving things, through transformations, entanglements, and disorder, cannot be approached through the gestures of foreseeability and knowability that characterize the human/nonhuman distinction (Hiepko 2011, 259). This distinction is a grand gesture of generalization that hides the continuity and imbrication between human and nonhuman worlds and between multiple and entangled worlds, spatiality, and temporalities. In addition, it places humans as the makers of history, of knowable, neatly ordered worlds, and assumes that history has a beginning and therefore merely continues. Our insistence on the inadequacies of this distinction, to follow Lugones, is to envision instead a decolonial praxis that pays attention to the promises of the unexpected, the unseen, and the unknown, while being simultaneously rooted in the changing material and the historical processes of multiple worlds in relation.[5]

As highlighted in the following paragraphs, there's undoubtedly a connection between privileging some humans over others and privileging humans over the nonhuman worlds. The genealogy of decolonial thought, in this regard, inscribes itself in a gesture of flipping the script, shifting the humans who occupy center stage. Nick Nesbitt, for instance, writes, "Two of the processes that came to distinguish the twentieth century were invented in Haiti: decolonization and neocolonialism" (Nesbitt 2005, 6). In "The Idea of 1804," Nesbitt's words emphasize that the colonized are not merely passive, enslaved subjects of history but also—with the example of Haiti—occupy the stage of world history as autonomous actors (6). With Haiti being a significant juncture in modern political history, I shall also emphasize that the nation (the mechanism through which Haiti and other decolonized countries shape themselves in post-slavery contexts) is a structuring mechanism that articulates itself in the history of the plantation economies and builds itself in the contemporary world; it is intimately connected to and shaped through the colonial logics of the plantations. In "Plantations Futures," McKittrick draws on Georges Beckford, whose work links the plantations of transatlantic slavery to a global economy generating North Atlantic wealth by means of a racialized economy that lingered long after emancipation and independence movements, to argue that the idea of the plantation is migratory and its logic defines many aspects of post-slave life (McKittrick 2013, 3). This is similar to the linkage that Nesbitt outlines in staging decoloniality and neocolonialism together to suggest that the nation operates through structuring processes and practices that are colonial. By contrast, in the present inquiry,

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this linkage pushes the reflection further: first, if we place decoloniality in a larger, entangled world of humans and nonhumans, in a broader sense of world history that goes beyond time and succession and beyond worlds neatly ordered within the terms of modern history, situating decoloniality in a specific period and in a specific place (Haiti, for instance) is highly debatable. Furthermore, decolonial moves (or decolonial thought or decolonial thinking or decolonial being) in ongoing colonial contexts are better seen as dynamic, unforeseeable, never-ending phenomena that are subtle, unpredictable, often hidden, and not always (or at all) legible (identifiable) through colonial mechanisms of identification.

Walter Mignolo makes a genealogical move similar to Nesbitt's, but on different terms. In "Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option," Mignolo situates the genealogy of decolonial thinking with Waman Puma de Ayala of Peru, whose work, *New Chronicle and Good Government,* was sent to Phillip III in 1616; and Otabbah Cugoano, an emancipated slave who published *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* in London in 1787, a decade after the Independence of the United States and the publication of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (Mignolo 2011, 47). Mignolo's notion "delinking" (after Anibal Quijano's "desprenderse"; [Quijano 1991]) emphasizes how the world's multitude of languages, memories, economies, social organizations, and subjectivities are shaped through a global economy and modes of knowing and being that are colonial. For Mignolo, a way out of this matrix (disobedience, delinking) is necessary in order to bring forth the multitude of alternative economic, political, social, and subjective modalities scattered throughout the planet (Mignolo 2011, 45). This opening, this turn in Mignolo's contribution to decolonial thinking, is important, for it propels the imagination outside of Western categories of thought. At the same time, however, the turn appears to be another project whose emergence and significance are still problematically tied to the colonial enterprise. It emerges from a logic of purity that supposes that some worlds (the Western, for instance) carry definite and settled features; this logic therefore does not attend to the complexities and embeddedness of multiple worlds in one another or to the entanglement of human worlds in a richer and broader world of human and nonhuman relationality. The decolonial, then, remains a matter of contestation between differently situated humans: Whose turn is it to speak? From which location should the truth emerge this time?

I lean on Lugones, who calls attention to the human/nonhuman distinction, to bring forth a decolonial imagining that is rhizomatic (Glissant 2002; after Deleuze and Guattari 1980) rather than genealogical. In a rhizomatic ethics of encounter, the line between the human and the nonhuman is blurred and the world in its being and becoming is infra-political, multiple, open, and suffused with bodies, inter/corporeal affects, sounds, void, rivers, and streams; whereas in a genealogical sense, there's a strong temptation to stay between the lines where legitimacy and authority exhaust the unseen and the buried or where the-forever-oppressed-in-themselves wait for their turn to make their way into history books. The fact of the matter is that the nonhuman, the unseen, and the oppressed (in their entanglement and cohabitation with multiple other subjectivities, grammars, and worlds), make the world and are the world (worlds). Rightly, Lugones argues that the global, capitalist, colonial, modern system of power (in the colonial encounter/invasion) met not a world empty of all organizations or a world to be formed; rather, it encountered complex cultural, political, economic, and religious beings, selves in complex relation to the cosmos, to other selves, to multiple beings, to the organic and the inorganic (Lugones 2010, 747). Alternative

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grammars, vision, spatiality, and turns are already present and inscribed within the multiplicity of these encounters and crossings, no matter how colonial. In a decolonial praxis, these dialogues and negotiations, often tense and violent, need to be acknowledged, not erased, silenced, or chopped up into dichotomous and fragmentary thought processes. They bring alternative imaginings of history; they nurture alternative senses of spatiality and temporality.

After all, the *Lakou* Beaubrun stages in *Nan Dòmi* means also, in Haitian Kreyòl, courtyard, an open-air place where children play and study; where neighbors count stories under the shades of oak trees; where woodpeckers fly; where people play, work, and dance. The Lakou is the normal, the mundane, the intimate, the relational. It is what people do on a daily basis and to which one would not grant agency or intention to resist. There is, then, no other space than the ordinary, the felt experience, the unseen to imagine and witness the movements of people transporting themselves into another world, into multiple other worlds; no other space than that in which the lines between practice and theory, between thinking and doing, between human and nonhuman are dismantled. Therefore, this article invites the reader to see decoloniality where she reads coloniality, and coloniality where she reads decoloniality (past where she sees future or present; thinking where she sees doing), that is, in their coexistence, entanglement, and negotiation and mostly beyond the call the splitting, coloniality/decoloniality, and their divided coexistence make, despite this paper's focus on both worlds and in their entanglement. And I use de<=>coloniality from now on to emphasize how both worlds of meanings constitute each other in their own and in the other's histories, grounds, and spatiality.

The Body-At-Work to Begin With

Throughout *Nan Dòmi*, Beaubrun speaks of her battle against a certain ordering of her body (technological performances), in the sense of Western ways of knowing and being (discourses, practices, expectations) that formalize and institutionalize her body (of knowledge) and how she stands in the research. It is worth highlighting that what anchors the project *Nan Dòmi* is Vodou, which Western culture has long associated with Satanism, barbarism, and less-than-humanism. Vodou (as religion, as worldview) has flourished in the Lakous where former slaves could live freely in the midst of the plantation machinery. *Nan Dòmi*, a few centuries later, puts forward the spiritual, intimate, and felt battle of resisting colonial cartographies in times where some lives are still regulated and deemed unworthy. This section considers what happens when the body's narratives and poetics push up against the traditional colonial mechanisms through which the body (of knowledge) is produced.

Beaubrun's battle underlines a bodily performance that is central to modern conceptions of personhood, which view the body as fundamentally separate and distinct from its environment. In addition, Beaubrun's disciplinary location in anthropology and ethnology positions her as the subject of knowledge and the agent of the research process while fixing the Lakou as object. Certainly, Beaubrun's academic location gives her power and authority to define and conduct her research. Such a disengaged position, however, was overwhelming: "At the end of five years [of research] I had learned nothing, and all my efforts had been vain" (Beaubrun 2013, 31). She theorizes this (false) power that the academy bestowed upon her as the experience of being trapped. Beaubrun's felt awareness of the trap propels her to question her responsibility in her engagement with the Lakou, as she deals with what Donna Haraway calls her

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"semiotic technologies" (Haraway 1988, 579). In acknowledging this trap, Beaubrun divests herself from the academic authority that positions her as being in control. As a result, the research takes off only with her encounter with elder Aunt Tansia to whom she confides, "I don't know how to catch myself in the trap" (Beaubrun 2013, 66).

Beaubrun's confession signals a shift: from a quest to know the other to a thirst to know herself within her felt experience. Beaubrun, from that point, places the research direction in the hands of elder Aunt Tansia whom she met while visiting a Lakou in the heart of several Lakou communities, and in their spiritual, emotional, and cognitive landscape. In placing her project into alternative spaces that exist alongside the ones provided by her fields of study, Beaubrun becomes both subject and object of her pursuit. This shift entails a reworking of Beaubrun's corporeal landscape from which she begins to see herself as a learner who engages with the Lakou by learning about herself with others and in their shared complexity.

Dian Million, in making the case for understanding the impact on mainstream scholarship of Canadian First Nations women's experiential narratives, emphasizes felt experience as an analysis, as community knowledges that create fuller, "more complex telling" because they put forth how the most marginalized stand against practices of terror and domination, because their narratives locate them within the heart of their own experience (Million 2008, 57–59). This bodily collective process is liberatory. It shows a body-at-work where people and communities turn toward their voices, senses, and spirituality by acknowledging their actual experiences. The body-at-work is multidimensional, offers the research process as knowledge, fuses being and knowing, and displays a sense of reciprocity between the body (of knowledge) and the landscape. The body-at-work is a shifted/shifting ground that brings into view with a greater sense of accountability the body's relationality, dis/ordering, and entanglement with other beings, human and nonhuman.

Therefore, the quest is one of perception and of the knowledge coming from the multiplicity of co/living perceptions. In *Nan Dòmi*'s first chapter, "The Teaching of Perception," Aunt Tansia advises, "avert your gaze every time you feel attracted by something" (Beaubrun 2013, 48). The elder also insists that seeing must be accompanied by the force of will, understanding that the object of vision belongs to worlds in which each one treats the others as spectators of their both visible and hidden sides (49). Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* explains that vision is an act of two facets: you either lose yourself in the object by closing up its landscape, or you seek out the object within its wider surrounding (Merleau-Ponty 2015, 77–78). For instance, to single out a cup sitting in a pile of dishes is to put all other dishes and the surroundings in abeyance. Also, when the object previously disclosed becomes part of the periphery because the viewer singles out another object in the pile, the viewer's feeling of enclosure is shaken. To see, Merleau-Ponty asserts, is to bring oneself into a universe of beings that display themselves to one another and exist for one another. Therefore, a look at the cup sitting among other dishes displays qualities visible from the viewer but also (from views coming) from other dishes in the pile, from the sink, from the counter on which the pile sits, and from the room altogether. Every/body is the mirror of all others. A way of getting around the trap, Aunt Tansia advises, is to enter into the dream state (Beaubrun 2013, 105–11).

Furthermore, I think through this inquiry as I move between regulated zones, as I think through what it means to refuse what Stefano Harney and Fred Moten term "the call to order" (Harney and Moten 2013, 8), like being summoned to go back to

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where I come from (as if where I come from is easily answerable). But I stand in Beaubrun's company against calls to be regulated. This refusal, Moten and Harney insist, is a game-changing kind of refusal as it signals the rejection of the choices offered within the call to order. Here, this translates into positioning myself as a Haitian *natif-natal* grounded in the Haitian imaginary; a woman of color living in the United States; a TPS-holder; a soon-to-be-deported who never dreamed of making the United States her home and who remains tempted by its promises; but mostly a something-else, located in an intimate elsewhere, within Harney and Moten's "the wild beyond" (7–8), within alternate (hidden) structures from which the act of deporting people or sending them back is too much taken for granted by those in dominant power structures. The trap of reading my location within homogeneous, hierarchical, and ordered structures of power is that they are out there, emptied from the concreteness of my thick histories, feelings, bodies, geographies, sensualities, and spiritualities.

A de<=>colonial reading, instead, emphasizes the incommensurability and the irreconcilability between projects of knowing and objects of knowledge, between the marginalized and the systems that aim to order them. It centers a body-at-work that opens and reinvents the frameworks, the geographies, and the traumas through which subjectivities and projects of all kinds journey. De<=>coloniality is not the undoing of coloniality or its opposite. If we see de<=>coloniality in those terms, we reduce its possibilities and movements to the terms set by oppressive systems of power. In *Nan Dòmi*, the Lakou emphasizes the world of intimate inter-relatedness (including nonhumans) that is resistant to but not defined by the structures of coloniality and (neo)coloniality. An understanding of de<=>coloniality that focuses on relationships to (neo) colonial orders misses that rich, intimate relationality—including with nonhumans—and ends up trapped in colonial logics.

The Body in *Nan Dòmi*

"I listened, emptied of all thought, I was incapable of pronouncing a word, overcome by a leaden drowsiness while at the same time awake" (Beaubrun 2013, 48). The body that grounds Beaubrun's corporeal engagement with the Lakou is a body exposed, unclothed, and vulnerable; a body-at-work with no star(r)ing role and which let itself be looked at. Aunt Tansia insists that to stop caring about the body and to get rid of its entrapment is to search for higher levels of consciousness. "Cares are the lot of human beings; to get rid of them is to enter the realm of the gods" (50). As I will discuss in the following paragraphs, not caring about the body situates the body-at-work in a process of de/construction where felt experiences, emotions, and languages are not buried deep in the colonial apparatuses or constrained by them. Instead, it exposes the body-at-work re/constructing itself and opening itself up from alternative articulations, dreams, languages, and spatiality. With this bodily vision, *Nan Dòmi* rethinks the politics and the ethics of the body by understanding corporeality as spiritual and by extending this corporeal/spirituality into the broader spiritual, temporal, and embodied landscape. The following paragraphs highlight some gestures in *Nan Dòmi* that situate de<=>coloniality within transcorporeal and intersubjective worlds and ontologies.

The first gesture puts forward a bodily vision fashioned through webs of reciprocal and generative relationships that flow from and to various entities, humans, nonhumans, organics, and inorganics. Elder Aunt Tansia maintains that our being constitutes a field of energy, underlining that the vast landscape carries politics, systems of thought, and articulations that are profoundly relational (84–90). This vision makes possible a

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different unfolding of the corporeal that does not remain subordinate to the human/nonhuman dichotomy. Lugones similarly insists on the existence of many worlds intertwined semantically and materially, spiritually self-coherent and in contradiction with others that they displace—the easily seeable and knowable cultural codes that order and feed the dominant hierarchical patterns of the social (Lugones 2003, 24). These worlds and articulations, while participating in (and sometimes at the core of) human projects, situate themselves in a larger corporeal, intertwined world. Within them, the body-at-work finds its possibilities well beyond late modernity's practice of representations of the subject valued through individual responsibility and accountability. The transcorporeality that is present in the nineteen chapters of *Nan Dòmi* emphasizes a way of sensing that displaces the body's cares in favor of intimate logics and processes embedded in the landscape. Elder Aunt Tansia summons Beaubrun attempting to flee a snake: "It is not a snake. It is your ally. Be careful! You have perceived her as snake because you have not changed position, that is: you have remained a prisoner of your fear" (Beaubrun 2013, 122). Aunt Tansia seems to have in mind that the Cartesian rationality and the fear that keep the body and the landscape neatly separated are conceptually related. A de<=>colonial praxis intervenes in the dis/entanglement and co/habitation of worlds, in their intimate logics, in how they amplify, rub against one another, or extend one another.

Furthermore, although the multiplicity of worlds lying outside, within, and beyond dominant structures of representation are institutionally weaker, they are, Lugones asserts, "spirited in a long-winded way" (Lugones n.d., 1). Claudine Michel and Dantes Bellegarde similarly write in their introduction of *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture*: "Invisible powers can be made visible" (Michel and Bellegarde-Smith 2006, xi). Calling on the in/visibility and spirituality of worlds confronts the reader with the challenges that the human body as the end and the beginning of all things poses. It also displays the inadequacies of the dualities, human/nonhuman, concrete/abstract, spiritual/physical, reason/emotion, and outlines instead their mutual imbrication. The body (of knowledge) therefore dwells in a dis/continuous remaking-and-giving-and-taking with the material, spiritual, temporal landscape, and offers a sense of the vastness and of the un/graspable exchanges among bodies, entities, and worlds of many sorts. As illustration, Beaubrun offers *Nan Dòmi* to the reader as nothing more than the teaching she literally gained from the elder. There is, undoubtedly, a ghostly sense of continuity of Aunt Tansia in and through *Nan Dòmi*. But there is not an overarching sense of Aunt Tansia's finitude or death in either the monograph or in Beaubrun's life, despite the literal bodily death of the elder shortly after her journey with Beaubrun. The point is that one's agency, politics, and subjectivity (dead or alive) always operate in a broader dimension far beyond the immediate registers of modern conceptions of politics, subjectivity, and spatiality.

Karen Barad and Stacy Alaimo have written extensively on the possibilities that lie within the interchanges between the human body and the material world (Barad 2007; Alaimo 2010). Through her notion of transcorporeality, Alaimo asserts that humans are interconnected not only with one another but with the material flows of substances and places. Leaning on Moira Gatens, Alaimo explains, "The human body is radically open to its surroundings and can be composed, recomposed, and decomposed by other bodies" (Alaimo 2010, 24). Diana Coole similarly deploys phenomenological analysis to describe the precognitive, somatic dimension that marks political relationships in collective life. For Coole, the body, which is the repository of sufferings and affects, is the most visible register of coexistence, although it remains largely

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invisible in projects of research. Drawing from Merleau-Ponty, Coole argues that "the body is active in composing structures and thus efficacious in changing its world: it does not require a 'mind' subsequently to impose form" (Coole 2005, 129). It is for similar reasons that Aunt Tansia asserts: "One must profit from all of his voyages, so as to mobilize the totality of his beings" (Beaubrun 2013, 67). That "The body has its own knowledge and its own memory" and politics (231) is not to argue that everything is politics or carries agency. Instead agency, politics, and subjectivities are always engaged through various means, worlds, registers, and temporalities; and these registers include affects, effects, and spirituality that are lived both in and through the intimate and the collective. *Nan Dòmi* exposes another gesture, which is: knowledge is what is, just is, simply is. Knowledge is the lived, embodied, on-the-go experience, the place from which there is nothing to understand except to return to oneself to see better.[6]

Barad's discussion of "diffraction" holds important insights here: "Diffraction/intra--action— cutting together-apart (one moves) in the (re)configuring of spacetimemattering; differencing/differing/différancing" (Barad 2014, 168). Trinh T. Minh-ha also offers: "A writing for the people, by the people, and from the people is, literally, a multipolar reflecting reflection that remains free from the conditions of subjectivity and objectivity and yet reveals them both. I write to show myself showing people who show me my own showing" (Trinh 1989, 22). This interplay of people mutually mirroring one another in Trinh's work, and of diffraction in Barad, collapses hierarchy and dichotomy and suggests that there is no teleology, no directionality in our being/be/coming. There's no development from one point to the other. The body then does not turn into the body now; there's no coordination or direct causality between here and there and now and then; all points on the spectrum interact. They are dis/entangled, spread apart, and re/configured into one another, from one another, separately, simultaneously, intermittently, one after the other dis/continuously dis/continuous. For Barad, being, knowing, and becoming are matters of inheritance and indebtedness to multiple temporalities and trajectories of one's thinking/being/journeying/knowing. "All is empty when one is plural" (Trinh 1989, 22). The body, in *nan dòmi*, is "a kind of indifference state where nothing is important in itself; it is experiencing many states of being simultaneously" (Beaubrun 2013, 48).

At the same time, seeing myself multiple is not being groundless; it is, rather, expanding my being/becoming; it is acknowledging the body-at-work whose story began so very long ago, whose story is so old. My living as a TPS-holder does not begin in my being located in the United States. It goes beyond my first filing the TPS application some nine years ago; it goes beyond (but also includes) my first memories of international workers visiting my parents in St.-Michel de l'Attalaye in the north of Haiti and discussing with them community development works around *pwa kongo sèch* cooked in rice and roasted pistachios in chicken sauce; it goes beyond (but also includes) the tragedies of half a million Haitian pigs killed by international powers and the impact of their slaughter on the Haitian economy; it goes beyond (but also includes) my parents' migration from St.-Michel de l'Attalaye to Port-au-Prince to save their lives following the US-supported coup-d'état in 1986 in Haiti; it goes beyond (but also includes) the hurtful effects of the 1915–1934 American occupation that fed the US treasury for nearly twenty years, and continues to feed it to this day. *Nan Dòmi*, and my reading of it, calls attention to this corporeal intertwinement where events, tragedies, politics, and temporalities, in their ambiguous beginnings and inconclusive endings, cannot be clearly demarcated in time and space.

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The body in the dream state offers this praxis of witnessing that resides in the gesture of reciprocal movement/s of things; movements that are dis/continuously and iteratively effected through various movements of breaking apart in different directions; a multiplicity of processes, and parts that re/turn over and over—iteratively intra-acting (to borrow from Barad); parts that we miss in our thought processes (not seeing them or recognizing them does not mean they are not there, theorizing on and reconfiguring themselves, us, and the world). A de<=>colonial praxis insists on this multidimensional, intimate, and spiritual embodied nature of one's vision and advocates for passion, vulnerability, and hope through modes of being where one is with others. To put it bluntly, *Nan Dòmi* invites attendance to the multiple relations, ethics, investments, and politics within which the body journeys. The transcorporeal, intersubjective body-at-work therefore calls forth political intertwinement rather than a detached, objectifying gaze. It's way too easy for the US government to assume they have authority to send me back where they think I come from. They do not have such authority. We would have to sit in the Lakou and talk, first; and we would have to wait and see what happens.

The Lakou De<=>colonial Praxis

Above all, the Lakou must be understood as unsettled, unbounded mobile engagements of important power dimensions that reside in relation to power, a condition of intersubjective process. This section argues that worlds, realities, and sociality as removed from a human/nonhuman dichotomy is the beginning of a decolonial praxis that situates individual and collective agency in their singularity, contingency, and provisional ongoingness. Tracing the historical process of what Coole calls "agentic constellations" (Coole 2005, 135) means paying attention to the body's affective, material, and spiritual participation in the processes in which they journey. An underlying argument is that a de<=>colonial praxis from the Lakou denotes a flight, a *mawonaj*, a marronage ("maroon," from the vocabulary of indigenous Arawaks and Tainos in the Caribbean).

As outlined in the sections above, a phenomenological perspective suggests that, in the Lakou, one's corporeality is linked to others' through lines of intra-material assemblages that change over time. Journeyers, animals, trees, spirits, logics, and practices of all kinds participate in and generate an ecology of relationship that holds together (and apart), in a reciprocal manner, the structures of life (plant realm, animal realm, and spiritual realm). Therefore, journeying in the Lakou is sensing the multiplicity of worlds in ways that do not split them into mind, body, and spirit or delink them from one another. To add a greater emphasis to Merleau-Ponty's formula: when the viewer enters into the scene she becomes an object (a different one from what she was before) whose senses and elements of vision become affected. The objects on display that "are" what they were before the viewer enters the scene are touched in (re)turn, no longer the same. Corporeality responds to perception, and this perception is embodied, rational, sensual, and spiritual. Aunt Tansia answers Beaubrun: "The only way to achieve it [catch yourself in the trap] is to begin by vanquishing your reason" (Beaubrun 2013, 66).

To vanquish reason: to be off, to go mad, to go noisy, naked, out of sync, not working, out of touch, out of order, too old, too young, too slow, too poor, unusable, unproductive, not enough; to vanquish reason is not speaking the language, not speaking any languages; it is being in the margins, being late, not having agency, not being practical, being a loser, an immigrant; being inadequate, improper, untamed, unproductive, nonsense. And to vanquish reason is also to live in alternative registers; it is taking flight; it

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is to flee; it is engaging a corporeal resurgence to the plantations' economic, material, and affective structures.

Neil Roberts, in *Freedom as Marronage*, describes marronage as "a group of persons isolating themselves from a surrounding society in order to create a fully autonomous community" (Roberts 2015, 4), highlighting that this "highly overlooked form of flight from slavery" was fundamental to the experience of Haitian slavery and revolution.[7] During the colonial period, slaves would flee the plantations to *rasanble* with other slaves and find refuge in other communities or build their own, leading to the creation of the Lakous. They would retreat to them and bond with others through African-based traditions rooted in Vodou. Beaubrun herself also retreats into the community of Aunt Tansia, a deliberate act to reach toward alternative communities while breaking free from her everyday politics, grammars, and knowledges. She leaves Port-au-Prince and drives for several hours on multiple occasions to stay with the elder with whom she visits Lakou Beaubrun de Malique, Lakou Nan Jisou, Lakou Lamatrie, and many others. She would not tell her friends and family about her experience with the elder: "I was a Catholic born to Catholic parents who were horrified by Vodou; my husband was born into a protestant family, fierce enemies of Vodou" (Beaubrun 2013, 43). The point is that dreaming denotes individuals separating themselves from their current living conditions in order to reach toward another or multiple others. The flight is physical, embodied, because it is Beaubrun's body in suffering, in pain, in need, and in thirst for something else that shapes her way into the diffracted structures of her entangled and diffracted worlds: "An unfamiliar way out was offered to me; it was now or never to exit from the 'educational and intellectual mechanism' to which I had been exposed. I was now face to face with another dimension" (58). It is worth highlighting that this flight does not expose itself to the structures of power; nevertheless, this "somatic agency," to borrow from Coole, gives way to a corporeal politics where the body holds political significance, where the body is a field of power, where it traces its own topographies (Coole 2005, 130).

In *As We Have Always Done*, Leanne B. Simpson similarly brings forth the notion of "grounded normativity" to name the "networked relationship" generated out of a deep engagement with indigenous processes that emerge from the daily organizations of indigenous life (Simpson 2017, 41). "Grounded normativity," Simpson argues, holds a series of interconnected and overlapping algorithms—stories, ceremonies, and the land itself that provide alternative logics, norms, politics to indigenous lives. These alternative registers transform, displace, deconstruct power relations every day. For Simpson, they are alternative political orders and systems "that refuse to replicate capitalism, heteropatriarchy and whiteness" (41). Again, an attentiveness to the other-than-human world, and our entanglement in it, resists succumbing to an oppositional stance defined by the logic of the colonizer.

In Aunt Tansia's teaching, dream/ing takes place in a similarly alternative normative ground rooted in stories, songs, proverbs, plants, and animals. Songs and stories between Beaubrun and the elder remain an important tool for reflecting, communicating, and generating meanings and knowledges. Through stories and songs, Beaubrun and the elder reproduce, rework, translate, and expand their life forces and trajectories. The pedagogy of Aunt Tansia, indeed, brings forth a contingent appearing of stories and songs through a process of relationality, difference, and alterity.

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M ape mande sa k ap resevwa mwen?
Ala m sòti nen peyi nan Ginen
Tou sele ak gwo lwa nan tèt an m la?
M ap mande sa k ap resevwa-mwen?
Ala m pa moun isit o!
(Beaubrun 2013, 76)

I am asking who is going to take me in?
I am coming out of the land of Ginen
Saddled with a great Loa inside my head
I wonder who can take me in?
I am not anybody from around here, no!
(Beaubrun 2013, 76)

Singing and asking *who is going to take me in?* displays an embodied process in which the elder is a part of the story, a part that is provisional, and which emerges in contingency and collectivity. Telling stories throughout the journey opens both Beaubrun and the elder to new meanings. It enables them to imagine and translate the multiple meanings that their storying brings forth, as well as to birth other stories. This act of (co) translation, to lean on Richa Nagar, emphasizes how each "telling" draws on a collective corporeal landscape that remains contextual, fluid, and unresolvable in the ongoing shifting relationships through which they are transported. Nagar terms the translation "hungry"; she draws on Glissant and Maria Mendez to argue that:

> The political potential of hungry translations lies in this yearning to keep the translations—as well as the relationships that energize and authorize those translations—open and flowing. This kind of hunger in a translation cannot be demanded or achieved through mechanical protocols. It can only emanate from an intense relationality among those who occupy different locations in predominant epistemic hierarchies (Glissant 1997); it involves cultivating what Maria Mendez (2018:1) poetically terms "a disposition to listening to incommensurable worlds where rivers tell stories and call upon us. (Nagar 2017, 18)

Who is going to take me in? propels toward an ontological (hauntological) immersion where bodies are both context and process; and where the fact of embodiment precludes an understanding of the body as discrete and with an agentic, permanent attribute (see Lugones 2003; Coole 2005).

We can then suggest that, from a Lakou perspective, de<=>coloniality is not a matter of engaging with social processes from the bottom (there's no bottom, no top) or from multiple loci of power. It's not about providing counter-knowledges or counter-analysis to authoritative modes of knowing. Nor is it about decentering settler perspectives or worldviews. De<=>coloniality acknowledges that the world goes in multiple contingent directions, logics, and narratives that are not determined solely by and grounded in human perspectives. It is seeing, acknowledging that the de<=>colonial process alone is already an un/doing, a living, a being, a theorizing, an on-the-go. Re-engaging within the movements, interchanges, and interconnections across bodies, stories, and projects of all sorts demands a praxis of witnessing in which the various elements of the world are mutually implicated and co-constitute one another. Consequently, what the Lakou commands is a thirst, a hunger (to borrow from

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Nagar), a desire for connection, for self-sufficient meanings despite the spatiality and the cartography charted by oppressive power relations. It is embracing with Aunt Tansia the idea that "It (knowledge) never reveals everything, not all at once. It doles it out ti gout pa ti gout (in small drops). It is necessary to be patient" (Beaubrun 2013, 37).

Asserting that the US government does not have the legitimacy to demand that I return to where I supposedly come from means simply that this conversation does not involve only Haitian TPS-holders and the US government. It requires the presence, the politics, the orders, and the vetoes of Indigenous Natives, of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) holders, of African Americans, to say the least. It requires opening up the events and interventions often relegated to the past and/or in faraway places. All these registers (this list is not exhaustive) constitute my topography, and not solely the US government, and not solely the present temporality. This is *mawonaj*: the refusal to be contained in registers that are hostile, oppressive, and destructive. This is taking the flight of *nan dòmi* for an entrance into the relationality of my felt corporeality, for an elsewhere rooted in ethics that are just, caring, relational, and unbounded.

The Unknown in Nan Dòmi

"To dream is to see. . . . A dreamer is a medium, a witness to the unknown" (Beaubrun 2013, 71). The unknown in *Nan Dòmi* points to a practice of spacing, to an opening that takes the body (of knowledge) for what it is. The unknown introduces the distance, the place in-between, the void that may remain hidden even from a multidimensional embodied vision; the space where all unimaginable, unthinkable, and impossible rearrangements can become possible. From the unknown, the body is the witness that traces meanings despite the body (itself) being estranged from the unknown. This concluding section of the article underscores a vision of the unknown in *Nan Dòmi* that is spirit-inflicted, an aperture from which un/knowing, de/composing, un/learning, un/dreaming, and un/be/coming are simultaneously mixed up and opened up, and into one another.

McKittrick argues in *Demonic Grounds* that the body is speakable, to emphasize that the body is geographies, landscapes, and constitutes by itself worlds, lands, politics, and legitimacies. To see the body as a map, to see humanness in its everydayness, and to find legitimacy in felt experiences, in bones and wrists—as McKittrick suggests—is to see that the body is "speakable," is "story," is "geography" (McKittrick 2006, ix). The immigrant woman, the TPS-holder, those who are said to be undocumented or not in order may choose, after all, not to answer to those who claim accountability from them. They may choose not to order themselves within the parameters of dominant racist paradigms while claiming and living fully their right to be and to flourish where they choose to, the way Dionne Brand writes, "I don't want no fucking country" (cited in McKittrick 2006, ix); the way novelist Maryse Conde declares not belonging to any country, nor languages, but to Maryse Conde (Conde 2011). The insistence on one's topography, on the right to one's story, isn't to see oneself as separate or unique. Instead, the singular individual is knowable only in context, entangled with the ordinary, the everyday, the on-the-go that brings past, present, and future together without being reduced to what the politics of representation and legitimation would make of her—a status, a formal identity. Therefore, the story one tells is THE story, THE complete story, THE full story.

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For the researcher, the government worker, or the observer, contemplating the unknown or the "other" should aim at illuminating oneself within the complex and limitless landscape rather than to construct that landscape or "the other" in a particular manner. As shown by Beaubrun in *Nan Dòmi*, her own complexity, not the Lakou's, is the only one that is truly analyzable and observable. The Lakou is that place from which she learns to press her fingers on her scars and wounds in order to sense better, to hear better, and to feel her body trembling with the landscape. The "unknown", in reference to the teaching of Aunt Tansia, evokes this way of living in the *kounyeala* that collapses all temporalities; it is an invitation to reengage with the relationality and the vastness of the landscape, a landscape that remains reflective, alive, and that theorizes. Beaubrun speaks of her journey with Aunt Tansia in these terms:

> Her teaching lasted two years, after which she underwent Janbe into the other world. It would take me years to absorb everything that she taught me. Even today there are things that I am unable to penetrate. I put them to the side and wait. . . . Her instruction was delivered orally. Aunt Tansia's method was rigorous. She was a disciplined and stern teacher, but at the same time, she was full of humor and possessed an extraordinary intelligence. She insisted we apply everything we claimed to understand. (Beaubrun 2013, 43)

Specific technologies such as books, systems of grading and evaluation, and degrees are fundamental to the modern conception of progress and knowledge-making. Aunt Tansia, in these registers, possesses no knowledge, for she did not go through the technologies of Western education. However, the elder's crucial interventions and teachings, and their resonances with fields of study such as Indigenous studies, quantum entanglement, and feminist epistemology, are a reminder that settler systems of education do not represent the only way to access constellations, and that often these technologies are not conducive to enlightenment at all.

This has been a very short engagement with Beaubrun's *Nan Do`mi* in my journey of theorizing decoloniality from Haitian ecologies of resistance. There is so much more to be said and understood, but I remain in the Lakou, patient, waiting, and open.

And I ain't going nowhere.

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Notes

1 On the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, see DesRoches et al. 2011.

2 For further reading on the building of the Haitian state in relation to international interventions, see Chomsky 2004 US-Haiti, https://chomsky.info/20040309/

3 For more discussion on the potential of the Lakou in rebuilding Haiti, see De´sir 2011; Groupe URDUrgence – Réhabilitation – Développement) 2012; Merilus 2015.

4 Liberation, for Lugones, is an intersubjective affair that shows the tension between processes of subjectification and their being met with adaptive, playful, creative, and/or oppositional tensions sprung from the subject: the active subjectivity of the subject (their minimal sense of agency that enables the subject to adapt, create, and oppose mechanisms of power). See Lugones 2010, 746–47.

5 The colonization of the Americas and the Caribbean was accompanied by a hierarchical, dichotomous distinction between human and nonhuman leading to other, related dichotomous hierarchical distinctions (among them that between men and women), and imposed on the colonized in the service of Western man; for further discussion, see Lugones 2010.

6 Barad insist on phenomena as being in "intra-action" (not in inter-action, in the sense of two or three separate entities that exist independently from one another), as separate entities that make one another up and that transform one another, in contact, in entanglement. This relationality enables each phenomenon both to exist ontologically and to participate in the redefinition of other phenomena. See Barad 2014. Diffracting diffraction: Cutting together-apart. *Parallax* 20 (3): 168–87.

7 Roberts discusses how Haitian marronage is crucial to understanding the Haitian Revolution's widespread application to European, New World, and black diasporic societies; see Roberts 2015.

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