

ABSTRACT

Revolution, Evolution and Transformation: An Investigation into the Haitian Short Story
from Jacques-Stéphén Alexis to Edwidge Danticat

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This thesis aims to contribute to the slowly expanding field of research on short fiction by writers of Haitian origin. It begins by performing a general evaluation of the short story collections being published by writers of Haitian origin. It is established that there is a disparity between the number of short story publications and the corresponding body of criticism on these publications. Thus, given the relative lack of discussion, this study seeks to analyse the evolution of the short story genre, as interpreted by selected, prominent writers of Haitian origin. Specific attention will be paid to collections by Jacques-Stéphén Alexis, René Depestre, Yanick Lahens and Edwidge Danticat. Each writer was selected due to their particular thematic concerns as well as their individual approaches to the short story genre. After identifying 1946 as a year of significant change in the approach to literature by writers of Haitian origin, the five collections studied serve as snapshots of the subsequent socio-political atmospheres within Haiti and the *diaspora*. The first chapter of the thesis focuses on Alexis and how he incorporates *le réalisme merveilleux* into his writing. Chapter two examines Depestre and his portrayal of sexuality and religious allegory before proceeding to the third chapter in which the concept of silence and the “vainqueur”

(“conquered”)/“vaincu” (“defeated”) paradigm within Lahens’ work are explored. The final chapter uses the theme of fatherhood to illustrate Danticat’s approach to the short story genre before concluding the thesis with an attempt to craft a definition of the Haitian short story. This is done through the acknowledgement of the points raised in the aforementioned chapters as well as through arguments of identity as they relate to writers of Haitian origin.

Keywords: Short stories; Haitian; Haiti – fiction; Jacques-Stéphen Alexis; René Depestre;
Yanick Lahens; Edwidge Danticat.