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## **Magic and Mesmerism in Saint Domingue<sup>1</sup>**

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Language still carries “the magical correspondences and analogies” of time past. Magic, Benjamin continues in his essay *On the Mimetic Faculty* (1933), produces unforeseen similarities, which he traces back to children’s faculty to impersonate people or things. This “mimetic faculty” is also at work in ancient occult practices, which, like astrology, yearn to establish “nonsensuous similarity,” or magical analogy, between the macrocosm and the microcosm. Benjamin believes we have lost the mimetic faculty to produce and even speak of such nonsensuous similarity, even though it still determines our use of language. He asserts that language started with the imitation of what it stood for. The mimetic faculty of language breaks with what Saussurian linguistics had summed up as the arbitrariness of the sign and calls for a “recourse to the kind of thoughts that appear in their most primitive form as the onomatopoeic mode of explanation.” Benjamin gives a few examples of what he calls elsewhere “magical criticism,” that all hinge on the concept of “nonsensuous similarity.” A signified can be expressed by many different words that may have nothing in common. But these words do share an occult similarity in the way they signify the same thing. He also mentions that graphology studies the nonsensuous similarity between handwriting and the “unconscious.” Probably with the surrealists in mind, Benjamin evokes how “the rapidity of writing and reading heightens the fusion of the semiotic and the mimetic in the sphere of language.” Automatic writing practices magical criticism when the text mimics, or shows a similarity, with a meaning concealed in the writers’ unconscious. Due to its “nonsensuous” nature,

the production and perception of “similarity” in magical criticism happens only in fleeting “flashes” (Benjamin 720-22).

We will try to catch some of these “flashes,” as they flare up in early ethnographical treatises on “Vodou.”<sup>2</sup> The colonial discourse on indigenous and slave rituals may appear as an unfavorable site for magical criticism, especially since it decries the belief in the magic of the so-called savage. But its authors, who definitely wrote their books too fast, reverted, despite themselves, to a savage or, as Benjamin calls it, mimetic mode of explanation. We will illustrate this claim with the late 17<sup>th</sup> century writings of a superstitious Dominican priest, Jean-Baptiste Labat, who wrote one of the first accounts of what is now known as Vodou in Haiti. In the 1780s, Moreau de Saint-Méry wrote the first detailed ethnography of Vodou, which is also the site of a strange conjecture. Saint-Méry, who vigorously opposed Mesmer’s animal magnetism,<sup>3</sup> nevertheless uses its terminology to account for the trance and contagious pull triggered by the Vodou dance. Through this contradiction, he practices magical criticism, which “flashes up” when he perceives a nonsensuous similarity between Vodou and mesmerism. His discourse turns out to be contaminated by the same magical contagion it tries to describe. Finally, following the trail laid out by Christopher Bracken’s groundbreaking *Magical Criticism* (2007), we will briefly evoke the way in which Benjamin’s mimetic faculty differs from what I call the art of metaphorical necromancy.

A genuine religion of the people in Haiti, Vodou dates back to the times when the first ships, filled with African slaves, arrived in Saint Domingue. The slaves, who were mainly wrenched from various tribes of western and central Africa,<sup>4</sup> brought with them their own cultural and

religious heritages. The colonial plantations became the seat of cultural exchange, synthesis, and amnesia, where these diverse cultural heritages underwent a process of cultural 'cutting and mixing' which laid the foundation of Vodou. Over time, Vodou also incorporated some of the indigenous population's beliefs (Taíno, Arawak, and Carib) as well as some of the masters' own rituals (Catholicism) and, as we will see, animal magnetism.<sup>5</sup> According to Alfred Métraux, the slaves believed that their ancestors lived in "Guinea" along with Vodou deities consisting of a wide array of personified spirits, which manifest themselves via trances induced by dances and sacrifices.

This short description of one of the major rituals of Vodou suggests how the formation of this religion helped the uprooted slaves maintain their cultural coherence by establishing magical correspondences and analogies with their lost past in Africa, a time before forced exile and bondage to the white man. In Vodou ceremonies, slaves could gather and develop a sense of community which resisted the logic of slavery. These communities provided an outlet to counter the alienation provoked by hard labor which was, for a largely outnumbered caste of masters, a crucial psychological factor in maintaining control over the plantations. Yet, in 1791, the plantations started to burn, and in 1804 Saint Domingue became the free republic of Haiti, the site of the first successful slave revolution of the colonial era. Vodou played a major part in triggering the slave uprising; C.L.R. James goes as far as saying that "Voodoo was the medium of the conspiracy" (86).

Long Before the Haitian Revolution, the colonizers realized the subversive power of Vodou rituals and, by extension, any kind of slave cultural practices, and started to devise ways to eliminate this alien and mutating slave

religion. During the seventeenth century, rumors about “black magic” and “savage orgies” started to circulate on the island, to the point that any practices affiliated with Africa were synonymous with sorcery, evil, or superstition. Under the cover of evangelization, colonial power tried to consolidate its grip on the slaves’ destiny by outlawing their “heathen” cultural heritage.

In 1685, the plantations’ masters received *carte blanche* from Louis XIV thanks to the publication of the infamous *Code Noire*, which stipulated that all slaves be baptized upon their arrival in the colonies and forbade them to practice rituals outside the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>6</sup> Baptism did not buy freedom, though, since most of the newly “saved” slaves could expect to taste freedom only in the afterlife which, with a life expectancy of less than seven years on the plantations (Hurbon 34) came to pass very quickly.

In fact, baptism was popular among the slaves, who often performed this sacrament more than once (cf. Hurbon 22; James 32). They considered the priest a holy man with access to magical power that might well be the source of the white man’s supposed superiority. They did not hesitate to increase their own stock of supernatural power by getting baptized or by displaying ardor for the priest’s religion. These priests were some of the first ethnographers and it is to them that we owe some of the rare descriptions of everyday life during the early colonial era. One of the most famous among them, the Dominican-trained priest Jean-Baptiste Labat traveled in the Caribbean from 1693 to 1705. His multi-volume *Voyage aux Isles*, first published in 1720, was an immediate success and contains some of the few descriptions we have of the slaves’ religious and magical practices at the turn of the eighteenth century. This work is

one of the first in a line of bestsellers focusing on the sensational aspects of life in the Caribbean. The success of such a sensational work is often due to the writer's own passion and credulity; Labat is no exception, as is shown by the following remarks concerning three cases of slave sorcery:

Je sais qu'il y a bien des gens qui regardent comme de pures imaginations et comme des contes ridicules ou des faussetés tout ce qu'on rapporte des sorciers et de leurs pactes avec le diable. J'ai été moi-même longtemps dans ces sentiments. Je sais d'ailleurs qu'on exagère souvent dans ce qu'on en dit; mais je crois qu'il faut convenir que tout ce qu'on en dit n'est *pas entièrement faux, quoiqu'il ne soit peut-être pas entièrement vrai*. Je suis aussi persuadé qu'il y a des faits d'une vérité très constante; en voici quelques-uns dont j'ai été témoin oculaire, et d'autres dont j'ai eu toute la certitude qu'on peut désirer pour s'assurer de la vérité d'un fait. (Labat 115, my emphasis)

First, Labat voices his ambivalence: these examples of black magic are not entirely spurious, yet not entirely true either. Then, in a typical paranoid reversal, Labat betrays his own superstitious or heretic belief, when he contradicts his missionary tenets by affirming the "undeniable" nature of the supernatural power of some of the slave "sorcerers." Labat goes on to testify about a nine-year-old rainmaker from "Guinea" who made a cloud rain right on a small parcel belonging to one of Labat's stunned colleagues. He also caught in the act a slave medicine doctor who was trying to cure a terminally ill woman and who ended up accurately predicting the day of a patient's death. To make a point to

the other slaves (and to please his readers' thirst for vindication) Labat gives a detailed account of how he flogged and tortured this "sorcerer." His last example tells the story of a convicted "sorcerer" who, before his execution, and to the surprise of his hangmen, correctly predicted the arrival of a ship in the harbor, along with many other unverifiable details about that ship. Labat crows when the supernatural power of his victim is not enough to save him from being burned alive.

The brutality and the illegitimacy of colonialism resurface on the pages written by this superstitious Dominican priest (cf. Labat 225) in the form of slave "sorcerers" endowed with supernatural powers, tortured and executed in cold blood by the agents of colonial authority for entering into, in Labat's words, "pacts with the devil."<sup>7</sup> These "sorcerers," who were most likely some early examples of Vodou priests, represent the site where colonial discourse contradicts itself and, in turn, brings its own claims to authority and legitimacy into question. Far from spurning so-called "black magic," this early ethnography actually reveals it at work in every aspect of the European colonial enterprise. In this context, magic would mean the colonial mystification of erroneously attributing a stable or divine origin to its "civilizing" but, on final analysis, belligerent program.

The best known and most influential description of Vodou predating the Haitian Revolution also invokes similar magic, even though it appears more "enlightened" or less "superstitious" than Labat's rendition. Moreau de Saint-Méry (1750-1819) was a white Creole who studied law in Paris. He is considered one of the most important French intellectuals and officials of this era in the Caribbean. His *Description Topographique, Physique, Civile, Politique Et*

*Historique De La Partie Francaise De L'isle Saint-Domingue* (1797), as its title suggests, is an encyclopedic compilation of research he performed during the 1780s on every facet of life in Saint Domingue. In the first chapters of his work, a discussion on dance leads him to a discussion on “la dance du Vaudoux” (45-52). Before the dance, the participants congregate around their “Roi” and “Reine,” and a box containing a snake which stands for “Vaudoux,” “un être tout-puissant & surnaturel, dont dépendent tous les événements sur ce globe [...] Connaissance du passé, science du present, prescience de l’avenir.” After the devotees plead for the magical power of Vaudoux to help them solve their problems and fulfill their aspirations, the queen, possessed by the snake’s spirit, enters into a trance and becomes the mouthpiece of Vaudoux. Once the queen responds to the solicitations and receives the tributes from her followers, the Vaudoux dance starts.

Saint-Méry refers to the ritual as a “monstrueuse absurdité” and warns of the danger that such gatherings represent for the colony. These “imitateurs des blancs, qu’ils aiment à singer” play King and Queen as they emulate some European dress codes but, more interestingly, they also duplicate the colonial power structure with their own system of domination. For Saint-Méry, “rien n’est plus dangereux sous tous les rapports que ce culte Vaudoux,” especially because of the relationship established between the king, the queen, and their followers, which he describes as a “système de domination d’une part, & de soumission aveugle de l’autre.” Saint-Méry’s perception of Vodou as a threat arises from his role in perpetuating the subjugation and exploitation that made colonialism in Saint Domingue such a profitable undertaking for the Bourbon family. The slave ritual works as a screen where we can perceive, in a flash, the



nonsensuous similarities at work in domination and blind submission. Magic becomes an important instrument of control and domination; an instrument that manages to keep its Kings and masters in power despite being vastly outnumbered by their subjects and slaves; at least, until the Revolutions.

Like a Freudian slip, magical criticism also springs out at the level of the language used by Saint-Méry to describe and disparage Vaudoux:

Ce qu'il y a de *très vrai*, & en même temps de très-remarquable dans le *Vaudoux*, c'est *cette espèce de magnétisme* qui porte ceux qui sont réunis, à danser jusqu'à la perte du sentiment. La prévention est même si forte à cet égard, que des Blancs trouvés épiant les mystères de cette secte, & touchés par l'un de ses membres qui les avait découverts, se sont mis quelquefois à danser, et on consenti à payer la Reine Vaudoux, pour mettre fin à ce châtement. (Saint-Méry 50, my emphasis)

To describe the irresistible contagion exerted by the Vaudoux dance, which dangerously draws in even the white masters, Saint-Méry relies on the vocabulary of animal magnetism. He speaks of contagion as a kind of magnetism, and in other passages he speaks of "crise" and of disciples "électrisés." His Vaudoux Queen shares many traits with magnetic somnambulist when, in "un état convulsif," "l'oracle parle par sa bouche." Saint-Méry's Vaudoux scene strangely resembles the magnetic séances that were, back then, wildly popular in Paris.

Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815), the Viennese<sup>8</sup> doctor who coined the term animal magnetism, moved to

Paris in 1778 to trumpet the wonders of his new therapy. He quickly became famous by performing his miracle cures, so much so that Robert Darnton in his *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (1968) considers him as one of the most important figures of the pre-revolutionary era, and adds Mesmer's name "somewhere near Turgot, Franklin, and Cagliostro in the pantheon of that age's most-talked-about-men" (viii).

Inspired by Newtonian physics,<sup>9</sup> Cartesian effluvia, and by the occult attraction and repulsion of magnets, or by what Benjamin would certainly call "nonsensuous correspondences" (Benjamin 722), Mesmer deduced that a kind of "animal magnetism" must also exist among organic bodies. Mesmer theorized about a pervasive fluid to explain the invisible influence he had on his patients. He then concluded that his patients' ailments must be attributed to an obstacle blocking the flow of this "magnetic" fluid in their bodies. Mesmer believed he could project his own fluid to help reestablish his patient's health.

The rapid success of animal magnetism brought it under the scrutiny of the official medical institutions that, for the most part, saw it as a threat to their own (shaky) practices, and that forcefully tried to discredit animal magnetism with multiple publications of reports ridiculing Mesmer's new therapy. Today, Mesmer's discoveries are being vindicated by historians who consider animal magnetism as the ancestor of hypnosis and suggestion, a major step toward modern psychotherapy. In fact, they attribute to his loyal disciple, Amand Marc de Chastenet, Marquis de Puységur (1751-1825), most of the credit for taking a major step towards what would eventually be called "talking cures."

In May 1784, Puységur discovered that, with the help of “magnetic passes,” some of his patients would fall into a state similar to sleep, but would retain their ability to interact with the magnetizer. In his first case of artificially induced, or magnetic, somnambulism, Puységur observed that his ailing servant, Victor Race, was developing remarkable gifts.<sup>10</sup> Under the influence of the magnetizer, Victor’s oral communication skills improved; he started to diagnose his own case, predict its course and find its cure, not unlike Saint-Méry’s Vaudoux queen. After coming back to his wits, Victor did not remember what happened during his somnanbulic state. When magnetized, Victor turned into the mouthpiece of another self which, scholars have argued, stands as the first credible medical record of an entity that would later be labeled as the unconscious.<sup>11</sup>

Animal magnetism landed in Saint Domingue in June 1784, when Puységur’s brother, Count Anne Chastenet de Puységur, at the head of a cartographical mission, brought with him the knowledge and the procedure of the new cure. His fourteen months’ stay on the island helped spread the enthusiasm for animal magnetism. A 1785 letter from plantation owner Jean Trembley sums up Anne Chastenet’s impact in the colony.

Marvelous cures that could hardly be attributed to any play of the imagination have been reported. A cripple brought from the plain to Cap François on litter walked freely afterward. A female slave paralyzed for fourteen years was entirely cured in a short time. [...] A plantation owner on his plain made a big profit in magnetizing a consignment of cast-off slaves he bought at a low price. (McClellan 177-8)

Besides profiting the masters, the slaves appear to have enjoyed its curative virtue. Most likely, animal magnetism blended with Vodou rituals. A scandal eventually broke out in the parish of Marmelade which, Saint-Méry reports, “a été le lieu qu’on avait choisi pour y faire fructifier les idées du magnétisme, assorties comme en Europe, aux vues de ceux qui les propageaient” (Saint-Méry 274). A mulatto and his black assistant “promoted their brand of mesmeric treatment and magical treatment” (McClellan 178) and were severely punished. Similarly to the Vodou dance, the influence of animal magnetism was soon seen as dangerous by colonial authorities, who organized a scientific commission to discredit Puységur. At the same time in Paris, a royal commission, which included Lavoisier and Benjamin Franklin, challenged animal magnetism by disproving the existence of the magnetic fluid – an ironic claim if we consider that most scientists on the commission, like Mesmer, were 18<sup>th</sup> century heirs to Newtonian Physics and Cartesian effluvia, and had their fair share of pervasive and imponderable fluid theories. Historians point out that the royal commission also had political reasons to oppose Mesmer since his theories inspired revolutionaries with its democratic undertone of an all-pervasive fluid accessible to every strata of society.<sup>12</sup> Animal magnetism played a similar role with the Saint Domingue commission, which considered it a disrupting force in maintaining control over the slaves.

Saint-Méry sided with the royal commission and censured mesmerism as an “illusion,” a “doctrine superstitieuse” (Saint-Méry 347-8). His disdain for the quackery of Vodou and animal magnetism prompted him to conflate the two in the citation quoted above. When confronted with the occult phenomenon of contagion in the Vodou dance which, as Saint-Méry noted, even affected the

masters, he can only explain it in terms of animal magnetism. In other words, a superstition described in terms of another superstition accounts, in Saint-Méry's text, for something that does in fact take place. Without realizing it, as his incoherence suggests, Saint-Méry exercises his mimetic faculty by reverting to magical criticism where the occult similarity between Vodou and animal magnetism "flares up."

Benjamin ends his essay *On the Mimetic Faculty*, by affirming that magical criticism reads "what was never written." Predating script, ancients read occult influences from "the entrails, the stars, or dances." Such rituals eventually faded away but, when Saint-Méry writes about the Vodou dance, when he reads the Vodou dance in terms of nonsensuous similarity with mesmerism, his language mimics these ancient modes of magical reading. Benjamin argues that, over time, script appropriated the function of those magical rituals, to the point of becoming "the most complete archive of nonsensuous similarity" (Benjamin 722). Magic still lives on in language, which might explain why Saint-Méry's ethnography betrays its affinity with magical criticism as soon as it tries to distance itself from it.

Christopher Bracken's *Magical Criticism* reminds us that "the discourse about savage philosophy offers a portrait of how "our own" discourse works" (Bracken 20). The figure of the savage has been the screen upon which to project repressed magical processes in the discourse of the human sciences. As we saw with Labat's and Saint-Méry's colonial discourse, magical criticism haunts so-called "civilized thought." What magical criticism reflects back at civilized thought is its inability to distinguish between signs and things. Instead, signs and things are linked through two types of magical bond, summed up, after Frazer, in Freud's

*Totem and Taboo* (1913). The first, “imitative magic,” functions through the resemblance between a thing and its representation. The “Voodoo doll” is based on this “principle of similarity.” The second, “contagious magic,” works through the ongoing mutual influence of objects that were once in contact with each other. The hair, the nails, or even someone’s name, retains a magical connection with its original owner due to this “principle of contiguity.” In 1956, Roman Jakobson drew the parallel between these two magical techniques and the two fundamental rhetorical processes of discourse formation, namely, metaphor and metonymy. He confirmed in turn that civilized, civilizing, or any other kind of discourse for that matter, operate just like magic.

To conclude, we will turn to Bracken’s section on *Metaphorical Animation* (Bracken 75-89), since metaphor, being linked to the principle of similarity of imitative magic, appears to have a lot in common with Benjamin’s notion of “nonsensuous similarity.” Bracken asserts that “there is a discursive *energeia* that yields nondiscursive consequences” as “the first principle of magical criticism” (Bracken 74-5). Aristotle attributed the term “*energeia*” to a natural force that renders the potential actual. Through a kind of *necromancy*, *energeia* animates the inanimate. For example, the flower programmed in a seed needs this animating energy in order to bloom. Similarly, magical criticism flourishes when pent-up energy contained in signs or discourse can be released to produce nondiscursive change. The symbolic torture of a “Voodoo doll” is supposed to inflict pain on the body that it represents. A metaphor too unleashes its discursive *energeia* in a process that echoes the principle of similarity at work in such imitative magic. According to Paul de Man, “from Aristotle to Roman Jakobson,” metaphor is conceived as “an

exchange or substitution of properties on the basis of resemblance” (Bracken 81). Metaphor has been praised for its faculty to elaborate “vivid descriptions” by pointing to unforeseen connections between otherwise unrelated things. In turn, metaphorical animation spawns vivid descriptions that improve the understanding of their subject matter, while tending to generate new knowledge. Within this framework, Saint-Méry operates a metaphorical substitution based on an affinity he most likely unconsciously perceived, when he transfers the properties of mesmerism onto the Vodou ceremony: the magnetic somnambulist is a metaphor for the slave queen under the influence of “Vaudoux.” Saint-Méry also “sleepwalks” through his account of Vodou when he contradicts his disbelief in animal magnetism by relying on its vocabulary. Hence, while his discourse mimics magnetic and vodou magic by inadvertently drawing a resemblance between the two, it discharges its *energeia*.

“To read what was never written” from the Vodou dance implies that things, not just signs, partake in language. Like many ethnographical accounts, magic, in Saint-Méry’s text, is a thing that eludes the grasp of discourse while being, through magical processes like metaphor and metonymy, the very source of its livelihood. Benjamin’s magical criticism differs from the art of metaphorical necromancy in that it considers every thing already alive or magically animated. Saint-Méry does play the necromancer as he tries to curse the strange thing he witnessed in Saint Domingue’s Vodou dance, but we can glimpse, in the flash of a contradiction, that he was already animated by it.<sup>13</sup>

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> This article is part of a more comprehensive project which analyses the intersection of Vodou and animal magnetism in Haiti, from early ethnographical descriptions to its eventual projection on the silver screen, with films such as *White Zombie* (1932).

<sup>2</sup> This word seems to have cast a spell on orthography. Among its many other spellings, “Voodoo” refers to a different era and set of projections, linked to the American occupation of Haiti. When not directly concerned with Saint-Méry’s “Vaudoux,” we will use “Vodou” as our generic term.

<sup>3</sup> We use “animal magnetism” and “mesmerism” interchangeably.

<sup>4</sup> Including Fon people from the Dahomey kingdom, which is now called Benin, and Yoruba people from Nigeria and even, at times, people from eastern Africa.

<sup>5</sup> Jean Fouchard writes in a footnote: “Dans la pratique coloniale, souvent on groupait sous la désignation de Vaudou à la fois danses, réunions et cérémonies des esclaves, même si, à l’occasion, les rassemblements n’utilisaient pas le rite strict de la vraie religion Vaudou ou n’exprimaient que de vagues formes de pratique diverses de superstitions africaines ou *d’imitation du mesmerisme* [my emphasis] que les colons mirent à la mode depuis des démonstrations publiques du fameux Comte de Puységur [actually, he is the brother of the famous one] à l’Hôpital de la Providence et assez retentissantes pour que le nom du Comte fût donné à un bâtiment négrier en 1791, des années plus tard.”

<sup>6</sup> See particularly articles 2 and 3.

<sup>7</sup> Even in the mid-twentieth century, Métraux records the testimonies of a priest sharing Labat’s superstitious belief



about the practitioners of Vodou: “Il m’est impossible de nier que les *loa* sont des êtres réels, à en juger par ce que j’ai vu de mes propres yeux. Est-ce qu’il n’y a pas un diable? Les gens de ce pays sont véritablement possédés par le démon, d’entrer au séminaire, j’ai été témoin de beaucoup de choses étranges. Par exemple, une femme qui pliait une barre rougie au feu. Croyez-vous qu’une telle chose serait possible sans intervention surnaturelle? N’était-elle pas possédée par le diable?” (Métraux 298-9)

<sup>8</sup> Actually, he was born in the village of Iznang, in Swabia, in southwestern Germany (Gauld 1).

<sup>9</sup> Mesmer first called animal magnetism, “animal gravity.”

<sup>10</sup> Natural somnambulism existed before 1784, but it usually referred to sleep-walking. For a semantic study of the word somnambulism, see p. 9 in Nicole Edelman, *Voyantes, guérisseuses et visionnaires en France: 1785-1914* (1995).

<sup>11</sup> Bertrand Méheust calls “l’évènement Puységur” the emergence of the unconscious as an object of study which will eventually revolutionize the notion of the self during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. See his preamble in *Sommambulisme et médiumnité, 1784-1930*. See also, Léon Chertok and Raymond de Saussure’s *The Therapeutic Revolution: from Mesmer to Freud*.

<sup>12</sup> For details on the politics of mesmerism, see Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France*.

<sup>13</sup> For more on Benjamin’s magical criticism, I can only refer here to Bracken’s demonstration of its ramification in totemism. See Bracken, *Magical Criticism/ The Recourse of Savage Philosophy*, 138-48.

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# Violence, Disaster and the Crisis of Representation

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the Twelfth Annual UCLA Department of  
French and Francophone Studies  
Graduate Student Conference  
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# ***Paroles Gelées***

**UCLA French Studies**

*Ce serait le moment de philosopher et de  
rechercher si, par hasard, se trouvait ici  
l'endroit où de telles paroles dégèlent.*

*Rabelais, Le Quart Livre*

Selected Proceedings from the  
Twelfth Annual UCLA Department of French and Francophone  
Studies Graduate Student Conference  
"Violence, Disaster and the Crisis of Representation"  
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