[Originally written as conference paper, this is a rough first draft of a chapter, “Dead Conversations: Toussaint, Modernity and the Postcolonial Present,” from my manuscript. My book, A Tragedy of Success!: Haiti and the Promise of Revolution, closely engages the tragic nature of the ongoing artistic turn to Haiti and its revolution within the Caribbean literary imaginary. I argue that twentieth and twenty-first century writers of the region are drawn to the nation and its revolution precisely because of the striking incongruity that is Haiti’s revolutionary past and postcolonial present. This incongruity vividly discloses how the modern Caribbean experience is profoundly shaped by the ceaseless play of radical change (conquest, colonialism and anti-colonial revolution) and debilitating social crisis. In response to the ideological work of the Revolution’s repeated narration in the Caribbean, my book argues that the Caribbean experience of modernity has introduced a tragic mode into literary representations of the Revolution, causing regional writers to depict the immediate as confounded by the past. Characterized by a subtle wavering between tragic pathos and comic elation, this mode is as much an engagement with time and its affective oscillation as it is a politics of possibility. It speaks strongly to the writer’s longing for total decolonial liberation region wide. More than that, my work ultimately insists that the frequent turn to Haiti and its Revolution by Caribbean writers is telling of the enduring desire for decolonial change within the Caribbean, no matter the harsh inequities of the past or the present that Haiti so vividly exemplifies. In this rendering of my chapter I haven’t discussed the tragic elements of the play I treat here; my intention is to work toward the dismantling of the Revolution’s most iconic figure (Toussaint) so as to change how the revolution is narrated and remembered. I would greatly appreciate any suggestions regarding clarity, i.e. if my argument is clear. I would also welcome suggestions regarding any assertions need to be unpacked for greater impact and precision and readings or ideas that could improve my argument. At this point, I am thinking of incorporating the work of Sylvia Wynter, David Scott (more directly) and C.L.R James. Thank you for reading!]
Once on this island, in 1804, freedom was seized in a protracted, hard fought, battle. A nation was born and a liberated people stood awash in the vast possibilities that lay ahead. For in this nation, there would be no masters, no prejudice of any sort, and no needless hunger; the people would be free to simply be, to live, farm and increase without worry of inequity. Throughout all the other neighboring islands, enchained people drew inspiration for their own long awaited freedom. They anticipated with bated breath the immeasurable possibilities for a profoundly different lived existence that they too could attain. On the island of freedom and independence such immeasurable possibilities appeared to wean by 1825; the new nation that was born on this island was dangerously close to becoming a debtor’s colony. Having bartered new beginnings for diplomatic recognition, the state of this burgeoning nation agreed to pay a three billion dollar indemnity to its former slave masters for their lost “properties”, effectively indebting the nation and its people to those who were once sworn enemies. ¹ Once that step was taken, the new nation that was born on this island found that by 1914 eighty percent of its governmental budget went to the coffers of the very individuals it, in 1804, had expelled from the island. ²

Just one year later, in 1915, sustained and often violent political unrest in the nation gave a new country, one with colonial origins like itself, cause to levy an indemnity of its own against the nation that had once defeated masters on its island. In exchange for protecting the nation from itself and from the ever present tyranny of its former colonial master, this new country would control the nation’s treasury (temporarily, of course) and create much needed infrastructure for the beleaguered nation now wondering, perhaps, if it, indeed, had expelled masters from the island in 1804. Others in neighboring islands began to harbor that doubt as well. For not only did a nation forged by enchained persons find itself subjugated once again in 1915, but many of these nearby islands found themselves similarly subject to the protection of this new country at the very same moment. Yet, all was not bleak. The infrastructure the new benevolent country offered many of these island nations included schools, roads and much needed medical facilities in addition to pioneering foreign owned agricultural companies introduced to spur economic growth. Interestingly, the massive amounts of land these agricultural companies acquired in the nation that freed itself in 1804 had the rather unfortunate effect of displacing people from their land. For the first time on this island, people began to emigrate en mass, giving rise to a new and demeaned, hemispheric multitude, hereafter termed, “boat people.”

Following this moment, the “boat people” would continue their exodus from the island their ancestors made independent in 1804. They would do so as a result of severe economic destitution and due to the rise of local despots—first a father in 1957, a son in 1971 and military leaders thereafter; all of whom were regarded as suitable leaders by the country continuing to protect the nation from itself. This newly named people would journey to places in which they were seen only as disease carriers, sluggards and pathologically disposed to failure, blamed as they were for the actions of their leaders and their new and old masters. A moment of reprieve appeared for the nation of “boat people” with the ascendancy of a priest as president in 1991; but that also proved devastatingly inconsequential for all, as little changed on an island now dependent on the benevolence of masters, those home grown and those from afar.

When the people of this much burdened and much maligned nation experienced a cataclysmic earthquake in 2010 God too seemed to agree with the low opinions that abounded

¹ See Laurent Dubois, Haiti: The After Shocks of History, 8.
² DuBois, 8.
concerning the people of this nation; for why else would such a troubled land continue to experience such ongoing difficulties? Whispers and blatant accusations of occult practices from foreigners and nationals alike offered ready explanations. They confirmed that this, indeed, was a nation aligned with the accursed one, acting as it audaciously did to free itself from its betters in 1804. Burdened with such a harsh present, many of this nation began to ponder if, in fact, this was the freedom and independence their ancestors imagined in 1804? They pondered, worse yet, if freedom and independence could ever really be attained on this island that was once, however, briefly free. Others looking on from nearby islands and similarly burdened by a history of subjugation and the ever resurgence of new masters began to ponder their own collective possibilities for self-determination and self-autonomy. If, on this island where freedom and independence was first decisively and emphatically seized, a new nation born, and where everything and anything seemed possible, if freedom appeared as little more than enchainment there, what of their islands? What of their chances for freedom and independence?

The answer quite frankly is slim. Indeed, the story of post-revolutionary Haiti, as offered in the vignette above, foretells the harsh realities many independent Caribbean nations and their still colonized counterparts would face in the late nineteenth century, the entire twentieth and in the postcolonial present as well. In truth, the emergence of a freedom and independence completely distinct from colonial enchainment has been extremely compromised by both the imperial presence of the U.S. (the aforementioned benevolent country of colonial origins) and the self-interested corruption of postcolonial and colonial leadership. Whether composed of local despots, ambitious middlemen or benign heads of states, Caribbean leadership has too often subjected constituents to the impoverished lived existence predatory capitalism and high-handed authoritarianism require. In so doing, it has sustained colonial practices of exploitive economic and political governance. Where, however, such capitalist sponging is not key to governance, the loss of individual freedom required for national independence and autonomy is profoundly disheartening; as such a loss is too keenly reminiscent of the draconian policing of individual lives and bodies within slave and colonial societies. The result of such distinct
forms of rule is that where capitalism and liberal democratic principles are suppressed high literacy rates, greater access to healthcare and lower rates of malnourishment prevail as political dissent and provocative self expression are suppressed by paternalist state measures. Similarly, where predatory capitalism and authoritarian governance reign supreme (jointly or not) literacy rates are abysmal, healthcare poor, starvation a lived reality or an ever present prospect and political dissent, while a real possibility, often takes a back seat to day to day survival. In either socio-political context, the Caribbean mass faces extreme hardship and, as a result, is forever on the move, seeking a life without the residues of slavery and colonialism and hence enchainment *lot bo dlo.* “Boat people,” sadly, most are positioned to be and, like their African ancestors of yesteryear and, indeed like their Indian, made to remain.

Subjected as most Caribbean peoples are to a conscripted seafarer’s life, the unwelcomed manifestation of regional freedom and independence as colonial enchainment urges critical consideration of what exactly should be understood as freedom and autonomy (of the self and of the collective) for formerly enslaved and colonized peoples. More pressingly, whose particular perspective should be privileged within this group when addressing this question, that of the still struggling mass or their routinely more educated and feed leaders? In prefacing this question with the narratization of Haiti’s post-revolutionary reality and the toil that reality has had on the Haitian people my project stands with the still struggling Caribbean mass. To that end, my interest in Haitian

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*Lot bo dlo* translates as “the other side of the water” in Haitian Kreyol; it references the watery journey political refugees and impoverished Haitians take when venturing to the U.S. or nearby Caribbean islands and the ancestral journey across the Middle Passage.
Revolutionary fiction by twentieth and twenty-first century Caribbean writers deliberately interrogates how the history of the Revolution is narrated, namely which revolutionary subjects are privileged and why in literary representations; my intention is to address what such narrative choices say about what can be and what is read as freedom and independence in the Caribbean. Of importance is how particular revolutionary subjects shape critical understandings of the Revolution and, in turn, the freedom and independence desired by its supporters (participants and/or onlookers) then and now. In this regard, this work addresses how a revolution that was, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot incisively wrote, “unthinkable” becomes “thinkable” through particular kinds of revolutionary subjects and the socio-political interests (past and present) they represent.

The implicit presence of distinct socio-political interests raises, however, an important question: if “in history, forgetting is political” than what is politically at stake shaping how and through whom the Haitian Revolution is read in the moment of the Caribbean writer’s rendering and in our postcolonial present? What is politically at stake in the enduring deference afforded to the Saint Dominguan born Toussaint Louverture in the Western, non-Haitian revolutionary record and in literary adaptations of the Revolution outside of Haiti? The same question must be raised regarding the revolutionary general Henri Christophe as well: why the Grenadian born Christophe? Why not the Saint Dominguan born Jean-Jacques Dessalines or, more pressingly, why not the largely non-Caribbean born mass and rebel leadership routinely offered cursory attention in the Haitian Revolutionary record in Haiti and out? Who becomes representative of the Haitian

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*Mis*Translations: Toussaint, Modernity and the Postcolonial Present

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*Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Silencing the Past,* #
Revolution and most suited to convey its story is a point of critical concern in this work precisely because following C.L.R James’ seminal work on the Revolution, *The Black Jacobins*, the Haitian Revolution has come to be seen as inaugurating Caribbean modernity. The person through whom the Revolution is read is therefore the approved face of the modern Caribbean experience. That this face is most often derived from the Revolution’s Caribbean born generals and thus a class of men (emphasis on men) who are later read as synonymous with present day Caribbean leaders should be encourage earnest reflection. As it suggests that scholars are seeking to “conscript” the past with our present and, to that end, diminish the immeasurable possibilities for radical decolonial liberation that existed both in the Revolutionary moment and that exist in our own postcolonial present.⁵

My intention with this piece is to counter the story of anti-colonial defeat post-revolutionary Haiti and the Haitian Revolution now invoke by troubling how the Revolution’s most iconic figure, Toussaint, is read. My purpose in this is to question whether the “story of the defeated [must] always be a story of defeat”?⁶ While it is true that the slaves of Saint Domingue were the victors of their revolutionary efforts and thus that

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⁵ In *Conscripts of Modernity*, David Scott closely examines James’ *The Black Jacobins* to read Toussaint as the first modern Caribbean subject. With such a reading, Toussaint becomes a Caribbean exemplar of the type of persons who would come to hold positions of governmental power within the Caribbean for Scott. The struggles Toussaint faced as a colonized subject to break away from France, ideologically and politically, proved his undoing; as the vacillations and self-doubt that plagued his later diplomatic relations with France during the war eventually lead to his capture and imprisonment in the Jura Mountains of France. For Scott, Toussaint’s inability to break from France is telling of how Caribbean peoples are “conscripts of modernity;” that is to say, they are indoctrinated participants within a colonizing Western culture that shapes their actions. As such, revolutionary efforts by subjugated Caribbean people are conditioned by European ideas of existence. To that end, the inability of contemporary postcolonial leaders to be anything more than neo-colonial co-conspirators with imperial powers is telling of the collective conscription of modern Caribbean peoples, who like Toussaint, cannot decisively break, in mind, body and being, from the colonizing West or North.

their story is not a narrative of defeat, it is also true that when that story of triumph is read against and with the post-revolutionary lives of their descendents that very same story of success becomes yet another narrative of loss, specifically telling of black ineffectuality in matters of self-governance and self-determination. That in mind, I am interested in how certain stories are conceived and narrated in a way to ensure the inevitability of defeat, that is to say, to further sustain the idea that some peoples are suited for, if not, forever doomed to subjugation.

In turning now to my reading of Édouard Glissant’s play, *Monsieur Toussaint*, I must begin with a confession: I do not know how to read the Toussaint of historical fact, the man he was in his moment. He so deftly played so many parts, the role of rebel slave (though he had long been free before the revolution’s advent), the role of liberator, planter, and autocrat, that it is hard to know when, if at all, he was sincere or insincere in the anti-colonial efforts he is most lauded for, particularly as it pertains to the liberation of the slaves. But I do know, however, how he has been represented and read in the Caribbean and that is what interests me here—that is, the Toussaint, who is understood as the harbinger of Caribbean modernity because of his reading of Enlightenment texts like Raynal, texts that were important ideological tools of the French Revolution. My interest then is in the idea of Toussaint as first offered by James in *The Black Jacobins*, as reaffirmed by Aimé Césaire in his text aptly titled, *Toussaint Louverture*, and, more recently, as redeployed by David Scott in *Conscripts of Modernity*. This Toussaint of Caribbean cultural thought is enlightened (in the Enlightenment sense of a reasonable literate liberal democratic subject) yet nonetheless, tragically flawed and unable to bring fundamental
change to the Caribbean precisely because of he is enlightenment. James, most strongly, argues that because of his enlightenment he is unable to reconcile anti-colonial action with republican ideals. With this reading, I am specifically interested in how this idea of Toussaint functions to sustain a particular representation of Caribbean anti-colonial possibility that I find invariably sustains coloniality; as this idea of Toussaint as enlightened subsists by not only making Toussaint and the Revolution indistinct but by also actively negating the differing desires and longings for the revolution and anti-colonial freedom that existed within the revolutionary moment and thereafter.

Glissant’s play, Monsieur Toussaint, is one of the few pieces of Haitian Revolutionary fiction by a Caribbean writer that deliberately plays with and dismantles the iconic figure Toussaint has come to be in the Caribbean. Set in the confines of the cold and desolate prison cell that housed Toussaint following his deportation to the Jura Mountains of France from Saint Domingue in 1803, the drama offers a portrait of a man coming into his opacity, that is, into awareness of himself as other and thus as colonial subject perpetually in translation.7 Readers and viewers are made aware of Toussaint’s journey towards opacity

7 “Opacity” is at once a cultural and political imperative driven by the need to exist in difference from Euro-American terms of being. Glissant writes: “We demand the right to obscurity. Through which our anxiety to have a full existence becomes part of the universal drama of cultural transformation: the creativity of marginalized peoples who today confront the ideal of transparent universality, imposed by the West, with secretive and multiple manifestations of Diversity. Such a process is spectacular everywhere in the world where murders, shameless acts of genocide, tactics of terror, try to crush the precious resistance of various peoples. It is imperceptible when we are dealing with communities condemned as such to painless oblivion. The discourse of such communities (whose shadowy threads of meaning where their silence is voiced) must be studied if we wish to gain a profound insight into the drama of creolization taking place on a global scale;” see Caribbean Discourse 2. Opacity or conversely “obscurity,” as a political and cultural desire, is a “right” to be demanded by “condemned communities.” It is a right expressed in artistic and political letters, in the intellectual “discourse[s]” of Caribbean communities concerned with their creolized modern reality and in the Haitian Revolutionary fiction of Caribbean writers I discuss in my monograph. As a political and cultural demand for an existence that is not easily comprehensible and thus readily amenable to a Euro-American conception of the other, “opacity,” (or more specifically the move toward opacity) is a move away from the
through Glissant’s rich depiction of the competing interests that drove the Haitian Revolution. Structuring his play in an atemporal manner with the dead in constant communication with the living, haunting and, in fact, tormenting Toussaint for his revolutionary deeds, Glissant draws viewers attention to the ideological struggle between enlightened and non-enlightened subjects that grounded the Haitian Revolutionary struggle. Accordingly that which elevates Toussaint to the status of icon within Caribbean cultural thought, his enlightenment and hence republican ideals, is the very thing that draws the rancor of other revolutionary actors.

One such actor, the deceased African rebel leader Macaia, sarcastically implores Toussaint on one occasion to escape from his prison: “Grab the keys. Grab them! You who opened the pathways. But who with all your grand words has been little more then a traitor. Nothing more than a traitor, I tell you! Coachman in the plantation house, look at him, he dozed in the shade of the verandahs. So, from the very start, he longed for his prison. It was waiting for him” (29)! Later, he states offhandedly in a less hostile manner but with equal disgust: “I tell you, this man has the soul of a republican. He thinks of tomorrow” (56). Maicia’s scornful attention to Toussaint “words” specifically, his crushing sameness of Euro-American universality. Euro-American universality, for Glissant, reduces colonized and formerly colonized persons to a transparent Euro-American likeness that facilitates tyrannical domination as it lays the conceptual and discursive grounds for colonial/neo-colonial oppression, for, that is, the West’s and North’s projection of itself as exemplar and ideal. This projection, however, is heavily contested by Caribbean peoples who Glissant finds continually struggle for their cultural and political particularity by affirming the multiplicity of their collective (creolized) being. Enrique Dussel makes a similar argument concerning Europe’s projection of self as the exemplar for all in The Invention of the America. He draws attention to the way in which the conquest gave rise to a practice of discursive exchange that conceptually seeks out the other only to inscribe him/her with ideas that reflects sameness. He maintains that the discovery of the Americas led to a conception of the other that betrays Europe’s dominant subject positioning; in submitting the other of color to European jurisprudence, the colonizer, he contends, rationalized and legitimized his/her claim to supremacy; see Dussel’s The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of “the Other” and the Myth of Modernity, trans. Michael D. Barber, (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1995).
republican rhetoric, and his attention to the privileged pre-revolutionary position Toussaint held on the plantation as a coachmen immediately draws the viewer to the class and ideological tensions that shape how Toussaint was received by some revolutionaries. Imbued with a “republican soul” that shapes what Toussaint terms as his “universal faith” in liberal democracy, Toussaint is positioned in dramatic relief against the non-republican sensibility of Macaia and the other dead persons in the play. They two embody, in fact, opposing epistemologies. Macaia is referred to in the play as a “man of the forest,” a man who Toussaint seeks to move beyond. Toussaint sweepingly states: “Forget the forest, the hatred! They mean nothing but sterility. Let us fortify our positions; let us clear the space around us. But let us also get scholars, engineers involved. Knowledge is universal” (62). What Toussaint seems to desire is that all persons stand as carbon copies of each other, abstract equals seeking to progress through a rejection of an Afro-Caribbean epistemological sensibility. He states at one point “there is no Legba, no Ogoun. There is science and knowledge now” (35). Macaia responds to his rigid investment in Western notions of being by accepting and owning his difference, “I am a man of the forest. So that means I am anarchistic and sterile. Ah! The time in which I dwell is not the time that takes you forward” (63)! With the play of difference between Macaia and Toussaint, Glissant, I suggest, attempts to point his audience and readers to two differing ideas of how to be in time that drove both the revolutionary struggle and future decolonial struggles in the Caribbean. Thus while, as Macaia states, “[Toussaint] thinks of tomorrow” (56), he deeply believes that “some day men will know one another, they will weep for the same sorrows” and they will do so making monetary gains through the clearing of space for industry (96),
Macaia demands attention to the now. He cries out in response to Toussaint’s enlightened longings: “But today! Today, today, today” (96).

The enduring demands of a today still shaped by the imperial excess of the past call for a revised rendering of Toussaint, as though we may try to rid ourselves of racial, cultural and imperial hatred as Glissant’s Toussaint desired the reality is we have overwhelmingly have not. Fully aware of this, Glissant routinely subjects Toussaint to instances of (mis)translation and re-readings from fellow revolutionaries, some who are ghosts and others who are projections of spatially distant revolutionary insurgents fighting for Saint Domingue’s liberation as Toussaint sits in his cell. There are three instances in particular that I would like to turn to now. The first happens near the drama’s beginning. From the onset of the play, the dead beg Toussaint to not tell his story, that is to not pen the memoir the Toussaint of historical fact did while imprisoned in the Jura Mountains. This memoir was authored for Napoleon and was, for Toussaint, to be proof of his service to the republic and the treachery of those who tricked him into imprisonment. The dead thus state: “We beg of you. Let your story lie sleeping in the fire and the chaos. Beware of the word that sheds light on what is hidden. ... O Toussaint, for there are none so deaf as those who will not hear” (47). In other words, beware of the desire for transparency and belief in transparency, in the linguistic quest for a universal mode of articulation that in relying on evidence attempts to enlighten and thus lay bare that which is subject to multiple frames of reading. If, the dead seem to suggest, you cannot be heard as a person of color how praytell do you expect your words to be read? Disregarding their warning, Toussaint states later in the play to his Corsican interrogator Caffarelli: “The First Consul condemns me for having
proclaimed the Constitution of Saint-Domingue. I will prove it was necessary. Why an army, led by General Leclerc, when one man alone presenting himself in the name of the Consulate would have been welcome and heard? If it is my devotion to the republic that is at stake, I will prove...” (66). At this final utterance, “I will prove,” the stage directions of the play reveal that Maman Dio, a vodun priestess who like Macaia is a deceased person haunting Toussaint, offers a “prolonged wail”. The directions read: “suddenly the drums sound. The dead translate Toussaint’s words”.

Maman Dio: Oh! Don’t let his voice be heard! ... He says he is faithful, a loyal servant, a faultless governor!

Mackandal: He says he has never broken his word because he did not attack.

Macaia: Meaning in the salons he forgot the smell of his people.

Mamam Dio: Meaning he left the free road on the mountain top to crawl on the planter’s road through the plain. (66-67)

When following several more lines like these and Maman Dio tells Toussaint that she can no longer remain with him, saddened as she is by his inability to hear her, he says: “yet, did you understand the song I was singing in my head” (69)? To which she tellingly replies: “We are not playing the same drum, Toussaint” (69).

Further reinforcing the distinct visions of both Toussaint and the dead and the republican ideals on which this distinction rests, Glissant has Moyse (the nephew and general Toussaint executes) iterate his difference from and yet likeness to Toussaint. Highlighting the abstract understanding of the slave mass Toussaint has because of his “enlightenment”, Moyse states: “I seek the people. You say, “the people,” I say, “the
disadvantage.” You say, “the people,” with your republican highmindedness; I see only those who weed, cut, and bundle sugarcane. In sackcloth, sweating, their heads turning giddy under the sun. The Republic designated us general and governor. Why, why? There was a beguiling mirror in our officer’s gold braid, we got lost in it” (82). Indeed, it would seem as if Glissant finds that Toussaint did in fact “get lost in” his “officer’s gold braid”. In a dressing down of Toussaint by Napoleon’s chief interrogator, Toussaint is stripped of his regalia as the dead recount the formal pronouncement in which he was made governor general of Saint-Domingue. It is only after he is symbolically ousted from his role as general in the French Republic and forcibly dressed as the peasant/slave of Saint Domingue that Toussaint comes into awareness of opacity, that is to say, he comes to see that he exists only in translation, always and already subject to colonial domination. He states to his prison guard: “… I write the word “Toussaint,” Macaïa spells out “traitor.” I write the word “discipline,” and Moyse without even a glance at the page shouts “tyranny.” I write “prosperity;” Dessalines backs away, he thinks in his heart “weakness.” No, I do not know how to write…” (116). Theses instances of (mis)translation and re-readings point to a subject seeking to exist in transparency and thus removed from the opacity of his creolized being. They point, to be more specific, to a colonial subject who performs a particular kind of writing and reading that is derived from the Enlightenment and that is invested in a transparency that denies him the means in which to write himself anew.

What I want to ultimately suggest that Glissant does through his deconstructive treatment of the idea of Toussaint is propose what would become a central tenet of his Antillean project of cultural and political decolonization, the task of re-making “the word”
(writing and reading) to reflect the Caribbean experience, to reflect, that is, the struggle for decolonial liberation that fundamentally shapes it. He writes in *Caribbean Discourse*: “Our aim is to forge for ourselves... a form of expression through which we would consciously face our ambiguities and fix ourselves in the uncertain possibilities of the word made ours” (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 168). The iconic Toussaint of Caribbean cultural thought cannot and does give rise to the “possibility of the Caribbean creating a word that is its own” through its letters and politics, for he not only upholds the Western epistemological framework grounding colonial inequity but he is lauded precisely because he does so. So that leaves scholars of the Caribbean and of the Haitian Revolution with one question: if Toussaint as we have constituted him can only speak to an epistemological framework that stands in sharp contrast to what is desired by Caribbean writers and the vast majority of Caribbean peoples in his moment and in our own then how can we expect to read in him, and in the Haitian Revolution he represents, the liberatory possibilities we long for in the revolutionary past and in the postcolonial present? We have created a narrative, through Toussaint, in which the story of the defeated must be and can only be a story of defeat. The question is why? To say it is because we are conscripts of modernity, as David Scott eloquently argues, is both fitting and too easy, fitting in that we have been shaped by Western manners of thinking and being as individuals living in a Western dominated present, but too easy in that such thinking cannot account for the gnawing desire for political and cultural difference that shapes Caribbean thought and Caribbean dissidence, past and present. The question then remains: how can the story of the Haitian Revolution be told in a way that does not concurrently negate revolutionary possibility and, as such,
the decolonial possibility the Revolution, itself, represented in the past and in our own postcolonial present?