VOCABULARY

CREATE DANGEROUSLY

Elapse (3) – Some time elapses, it seems, as the schoolchildren mill around.

Uction (4) – If this is Numa’s extreme uction, it is an abridged version.

Abridged (4) – If this is Numa’s extreme unction, it is an abridged version.

Scope (7) – Like most creation myths, this one too exists beyond the scope of my own life, yet it still feels present, even urgent.

Decrepit (14) – Perhaps there are no writers in my family because they were not allowed to or could barely afford to attend a decrepit village school as children.

Directive (14) – Perhaps there are no artists in my family because they were silenced by the brutal directives of one dictatorship, or one natural disaster, after another.

Diabolic (15) – Even without globalization, the writer bound to the reader, under diabolic, or even joyful, circumstances inevitably becomes a loyal citizen of the country of his readers.

Acclimation (19) – Self-doubt is probably one of the stages of acclimation in a new culture.

WALK STRAIGHT

Trek (22) - I have come to see just how far we have trekked in less than two generations, from Léogâne’s rural hamlet of Beauséjour to Miami and New York City, from the valley to skyscrapers.

Strenuous (29) – I was not allowed to do any work other than shell peas and sort corn kernels from the newly harvested corn because I was a city girl and the other types of work were considered too strenuous for me.

Zealous (30) – He has zealously collected money from family members and friends to build it so that some of the children of Beauséjour, both boys and girls can learn to read and write.

Malign (32) – Maligned as we were in the media at the time, as disaster-prone refugees and boat people and AIDS carriers, many of us had become overly sensitive and were eager to censor anyone who did not project a “positive image” of Haiti and Haitians.
Subsequent (33) - …my note to Sophie was later published as an afterword in all subsequent editions of the book, becoming an addendum to the text.

Elixer (36) – What if such a thing did exist, an elixer against fading memories, a panacea to evoke images of spaces lost to us, to instantly return us home.

Panacea (36) - What if such a thing did exist, an elixer against fading memories, a panacea to evoke images of spaces lost to us, to instantly return us home.

Logistical (39) – The grief on my father’s face is clouded with logistical figurations.

I AM NOT A JOURNALIST

Autonomy (42) - … being the owner and director allowed him a kind of autonomy that few hired journalists could manage in a volatile political climate.

Volatile (42) - …being the owner and director allowed him a kind of autonomy that few hired journalists could manage in a volatile political climate.

Multifaceted (42) – Of course, Jean’s life was too multifaceted and complex to make sense of in these very early hours so soon after his death.

Nomadic (44) - …many of the filmmakers, including Jean, had lost track of their own prints during nomadic lives in exile.

Flourish (44) – Perhaps this is why the visual arts have flourished in Haiti. Painters do not necessarily need to know how to read or write.

Treatise (45) – The film, which begins as a harshly realistic treatise on the restavek child labor system in Haiti, ends as a musical fantasy in which the child servant is rescued by a pale Haitian woman who becomes the girl’s fairy godmother.

Diaspora (49) - …he describes diaspora/dyaspora as a “term employed to refer to any dispersal of people to foreign soils.” But in the Haitian context it is used “to identify the hundreds of thousands of Haitians living in many countries of the world.”

Pretentious (50) - …members of the dyaspora would be classified—justifiably or not—as arrogant, insensitive, overbearing, and pretentious people…

Impunity (56) – “We need to end this climate of impunity and find justice now.”

DAUGHTERS OF MEMORY
Rote (59) – Reading in New York would not be like reading back in Haiti, where *rote* memorization was the primary method of learning for children my age and where I had memorized, then recited, and then quickly forgotten at least a million unsavored words.

Impenetrable (59) – …I had resented those forgotten words, their length and complication, their *impenetrability*, their occasional irrelevance to my tropical reality.

Paradox (62) – I was of course drawn to its *paradoxical* title. How can an amnesiac remember?

Predicament (66) – Claire Clamont, the main character of *Love*, equates her own unfortunate predicament as a thirty-nine-year-old virgin with the predicaments of D.H. Lawrence’s Lady Chatterly and Flaubert’s Madame Bovary…

Rebuke (69) – At first Marie Vieux-Chauvet resisted, insisting that the publication of the book might bring *rebuke* and shame to the regime, but then it became obvious that she would have to choose between the book and the people she loved.

Valiant (69) – Through the *valiant* effort of a devoted reader, the work of that book’s fictional writer manages to live on…

Atrocious (69) – Foreign investment flowed into Haiti, nurturing an *atrocious* sweatshop culture that added another layer of despair to the lives of a population that could not refuse to work, no matter how *meager* the pay.

Meager (70) – Foreign investment flowed into Haiti, nurturing an atrocious sweatshop culture that added another layer of despair to the lives of a population that could not refuse to work, no matter how *meager* the pay.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WATER

Abrupt (88) – …the obstacles to Marius’s flight had been abruptly lifted and he’d gone ahead on his own, before me, to be buried.

Euphemism (89) – The bad disease, a *euphemism* for acquired immune deficiency syndrome, or AIDS.

Mitigate (90) – Maybe he had some assets that could help *mitigate* the transportation and funeral costs.

Sanitize (94) – It was all so *sanitized*, so over-the-phone, nothing *Antigone* about it.

Denote (94) – In Haiti the same expression, *lòt bò dlo*, the other side of the water, can be used to *denote* the eternal afterlife as well as an émigré’s eventual destination.

Taunt (95) – But it was still sunny over the water, the waves glittering as though *taunting* the fogginess above.
BICENTENNIAL

Insurgency (98) – Thomas Jefferson, who had drafted the declaration that defined his own nation’s insurgency and who had witnessed and praised the French Revolution, knew exactly what revolutions meant.

Downtrodden (98) – Their essence was not in their instantaneous bursts of glory but in their ripple effect across borders and time, their ability to put the impossible within reach and make the downtrodden seem mighty.

Nascent (98) – So Haiti’s independence remained unrecognized by Thomas Jefferson, who urged Congress to suspend commerce with the nascent nation, declaring its leaders “cannibals of the terrible republic.”

Evocative (101) – After all, there has never been a more evocative moment in Haiti’s history—even though neglected by the world—than the triumphant outcome of the revolution that L’Ouverture and others had lived and died for exactly two hundred years earlier.

Proliferation (102) - …forcing his countrymen to experience “the rebirth of shackles, the proliferation of suffering, which the more resigned began to accept as proof of the uselessness of all revolt.”

Disheartening (102) – Though Ti Noël does not remain among the resigned for too long, he is certainly tested through his disheartening encounters with those who have shaped his country’s destiny.

Mundane (103) – The real marvelous is in the extraordinary and the mundane, the beautiful and the repulsive, the spoken and the unspoken.

Evocation (104) – As President Aristide’s opportune evocation of Toussaint L’Ouverture shows, for many of us, it is as though the Haitian revolution was fought less than two hundred days, rather than more than two hundred years, ago.

ANOTHER COUNTRY

Dismal (111) – After all, we do share a planet whose climate is gradually being altered by unbalanced exploration and dismal environmental policies…

Render (111) - …that may one day render us all, first and third world residents alike, helpless in the face of more disasters like Tropical Storm Jeanne and Hurricane Katrina.

Nuanced (111) – In the case of Hurricane Katrina, was it really a flood that washed away the nuanced privilege of deciding where one should build one’s life, or was this right being stripped away while we were already too horrified to watch?

Facile (112) – So too with catastrophes and disasters, which inevitably force you to rethink facile allegiances.
Coup d’etat (112) - …a day that also marked the twenty-eight anniversary of a U.S.-sponsored coup d’etat against her uncle, Salvador Allende.

FLYING HOME

Affable (117) – It turns out there were a few, among them an affable man with salt-and-pepper hair, who immediately took control of the situation…

Arbitrary (118) – Community, like family, is sometimes a result of arbitrary grouping.

Luminescent (119) – I am allowed a picture-postcard view of all the places that are lit in my arrival city, what combat fighters once called a “God’s-eye view” of the luminescent ground.

Hapless (121) – Control was wrested from your pilot’s hands, / And yours, mid-atlantic, hapless voyager.

Metamorphosis (124) – “For through that better perception he stands one step nearer to things, and see the flowing or metamorphosis… that within every creature is a force impelling it to ascend into a higher form.”

Impel (124) – “For through that better perception he stands one step nearer to things, and see the flowing or metamorphosis… that within every creature is a force impelling it to ascend into a higher form.”

Ascend (124) – “For through that better perception he stands one step nearer to things, and see the flowing or metamorphosis… that within every creature is a force impelling it to ascend into a higher form.”

Existential (125) – Richard’s work featured “men who were alienated and unacknowledged, using that for his own existential feelings as a black man, an artist, and immigrant.”

WELCOMING GHOSTS

Primitive (127) – “Haitian primitives? What do you mean? People? People nailed up on my walls?”

Transient (130) – The vèvè sketches are usually transient—they vanish underfoot at the ceremonies…

Realm (130) – …except when sewn on sequined ceremonial flags that have stepped so far out of their ritual realm that they are now used on trendy designer purses and clothes.

Virtuoso (131) – “Virtuoso is the province of divinity.”

Province (131) – “Virtuoso is the province of divinity.”

Divinity (131) – “Virtuoso is the province of divinity.”
Moniker (135) – Ginen stands in for all of Africa, renaming with the moniker of one country an ideological continent which, if it cannot welcome the returning bodies of its lost children, is more than happy to welcome back their spirits.

ACHEIROPOIETOS

Dissenter (138) – On the open paneled doors were enlarged photographs of Marcel Numa and Louis Drouin’s corpses, purposely put on display as deterrents for the country’s potential dissenters.

Mutable (140) – “To take a photograph,” Sontag continues, “is to participate in another person (or thing’s) mortality, vulnerability, mutability.”

Oeuvre (140) – Children in quiet distress… often appear in his oeuvre.

Provocative (143) – “I’d like to take pictures with less conflict and tension, less provocative pictures,” he says.

Keepsake (147) – In that way, the heartbroken father was following a long-honored tradition, in Haiti and elsewhere, of taking a keepsake photograph of the dead as a way of keeping them with us, and at the same time allowing his loved one’s face to stand for many.

Emblematic (147) – To suddenly become emblematic of a problem, the “face” of ravaged Haiti, is its own rude awakening, its own culture shock.

Manifest (149) – So as news of Gran Brigit’s manifested presence spread, massive crowds filled the cemetery, trampling the mausoleums and graves.

OUR GUERNICA

Abyss (158) – Has two hundred and six years of existence finally reached its abyss? we wonder.

Hasty (158) – With thousands hastily and superficially buried or lodged in miles and miles of rubble, I said, Haiti is no longer just slippery ground, but also sacred ground.

Superficial (158) – With thousands hastily and superficially buried or lodged in miles and miles of rubble, I said, Haiti is no longer just slippery ground, but also sacred ground.

Infuse (160) – Dany is one of the funniest people I know and his sense of humor often infuses his work.

Fervor (162) – I will venture to say that perhaps we will write with the same fervor and intensity (or even more) as before.

Insurmountable (166) - …to watch your father die, and then nearly die yourself, all before your tenth birthday, seems like an insurmountable obstacle for any child.