

## **Picture Books in Libraries: A Tool for Advancing Reading in Haiti**

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**Session:**

**99 — *Picture books in libraries now!* — Libraries for Children and Young Adults**

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### **Abstract:**

*In Haiti, children's literature is a new genre which appeared at the end of the twentieth century and led to the emergence of the picture book as a tool for initiating children to reading.*

*In the context of the IFLA project "Le monde à travers les albums" (The World Through Picture Books), a study was performed during the events held in reading areas for children: this study showed that the picture book constitutes a tool suitable for children throughout their reading process, from awakening to flourishing.*

*This presentation will evaluate the situation of the production, publication and reading of picture books in Haiti over the course of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It will contain a short history of this form of writing in Haiti and a presentation of children's book authors and illustrators, of the state of the production and publication of children's books, of reading events, and of the Fête du livre jeunesse (Celebration of the Children's Book). Another part of this presentation will be dedicated to the steps taken towards the execution of the IFLA study and finally, to presenting the selection of ten picture books that were chosen.*

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## **Introduction**

The children's book is a relatively new tool in Haitian society. Today, it is a genre in the process of evolving. Haitian literature was born in a relatively difficult context, that of the period of the country's declaration of independence at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the

colony, a certain form of literature was already present: while the colonists devoted themselves to writing poems, another form of spoken literature from the oral tradition was born amongst the slaves. They “[pulled] stories”<sup>1</sup>, telling stories during the rare moments when they gathered together after a hard day of work. This oral tradition continued to evolve even after independence and allowed for the emergence of our traditional stories.

Reading is an essential element in the learning process of children. The expression “children’s literature” was not yet used in the country at that time; one spoke rather of another form of production and publication of books for a younger readership: school textbooks.

Around the year 1998, the Haitian publishing world began to take an interest in publishing books for children. At the time, children’s books did not have their own designated space in which to be read. Those who had inherited a culture of reading, either at school or at home, read only books by foreign authors. In 1998, Véronique Tadjó<sup>2</sup>, under the initiative of the French Institute of Haiti, came to the country in order to lead workshops on writing and illustrating children’s books. This form of literature did not yet exist in Haiti, and the idea was to have young illustrators and Haitian authors work on the question of children’s literature. In some cases, these were experienced authors, but who had never written children’s literature. Thus, this new form of literature began to grow in Haiti. The same year, the Éditions Henri Deschamps, which published school textbooks, also launched into this form of production.

Some time later, we attended the opening of the first reading area for children at the multimedia library of the French Institute of Haiti, set up by a colleague, Marie-Ange Sénat<sup>3</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> The Creole expression “tire kont” designates the act of gathering together in the evening to tell stories.

<sup>2</sup> A French-Ivoirian writer.

<sup>3</sup> Marie-Ange Sénat is a librarian. She is very interested in activities and readings for children.

and which was developed during this session. She also set up *Biblioservice*, an organization for training and events for local libraries. She subsequently created “portable libraries” in order to distribute books in poor neighborhoods and schools.

Marie-Ange Sénat, during a book event in Haiti.



A new wave of writers and illustrators began to produce works of fiction for children (picture books, stories, first-readers...) Some authors adapted their works for children, others tentatively created fictional texts for a younger audience. During this same period, around the year 1999, began the first children’s events at the multimedia library of the French Institute of Haiti. This same year, in the context of the “Promotion de Livre et de Lecture” (Advancement of Books and Reading) project, the French Institute of Haiti organized, yet again, a workshop on writing children’s novels led by the writer Marie Saint-Dizier<sup>4</sup>.

Some years later, the libraries of the Alliances Françaises in provinces of Haiti opened children’s sections and began to hold events on a more-or-less regular basis. Next came the children’s section in the Monique Calixte library of the FOKAL<sup>5</sup> as well as in the other libraries in the organization’s network. Reading areas were opened in ten communes in Haiti by the CLAC network<sup>6</sup>, and activities and events were set up. Certain schools in the capital of

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<sup>4</sup> Children’s book author.

<sup>5</sup> Fondation Konesans ak Libète ([www.fokal.org](http://www.fokal.org)).

<sup>6</sup> Centre de Lecture et d’Animation Culturelle (Center for Reading and Cultural Activities) (CLAC) allows access to reading in rural communities, responds to reading needs as expressed by students and teachers, encourages children to go to school, and allows young people outside of the school system to pursue their professional and intellectual development.



Haiti gave themselves the task of reserving a play and reading area for children. Éditha began its program “*valise itinérante*” (travelling suitcase) which brings suitcases of books into schools in order for them to be used by the students in their classes.

Over time, other writing workshops followed, such as those of Bernard Friot<sup>7</sup> and of Odette Charreyron-Michel<sup>8</sup>.

## I- Picture Books in Haiti

In children’s areas in Haiti, the picture book is considered to be the first tool used for initiating children to reading. Written for the most part in French, it is used in activities and by parents in order to help the child to develop the vocabulary and sentence structures of French. Indeed, children’s mother tongue is Creole<sup>9</sup>, but all teaching and administration is conducted in French.

The picture book is also, clearly, a way to mold children’s imaginations. This type of writing appeared in Haiti around 1998 in an effort to integrate young readers into the process of accessing information. It then evolved, little by little. The young children who were not yet able to read were attracted by the illustrations, by a space and a culture that belonged to them.

Given the linguistic situation of the country mentioned above, and the rate of illiteracy, reading in the mother tongue, Creole, is strongly recommended by linguists, psychologists,

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<sup>7</sup> Bernard Friot is a French writer who specializes in children’s literature.

<sup>8</sup> Odette Charreyron-Michel is trains young librarians and teachers in Paraguay, Chili, and Haiti. She also organizes activities and events for children and street children in particular. [Http://lighis.over-blog.org/](http://lighis.over-blog.org/).

<sup>9</sup> The language of peoples born into slavery. Haitian Creole is based on French vocabulary.

and teachers. Doing so stimulates cognitive development, aids in scholastic learning and reinforces self-esteem. From this idea began efforts towards the integration of children's texts written in Creole. Thus, the Éditions Université Caraïbe sent out a petition for works of literature written in Creole. In 2012, two years after the earthquake, they began a project entitled "Lire pour mieux se connaître" (Read In Order to Better Know Oneself) which attempted to make up for the lack of works written in Creole by publishing five new titles and assuring the quality of reading by organizing reading activities and Bibliotherapy sessions for children and young people in the Delmas area (Port-au Prince).

The types of picture books written for children in Haiti are not very numerous. We are still in the fiction phase. Other types of picture books have not yet been attempted, for example enumerative, documentary, counting books, etc. For the most part, authors choose type-characters (Bénisoit, la Petite feuille) and make a series out of them. Some picture books are adaptations of works for adults, others adaptations of works by foreign authors, for example the two works of Maël Fouchard *Le Loup et l'agneau* (The Wolf and the Lamb) and *La Cigale et la fourmi* (The Cicada and the Ant), adapted from fables by La Fontaine.

The themes of picture books are fairly varied. Each picture book, though, describes a universe of its own which is inviting to children and which removes them from their immediate environment.

The majority of picture books in Haiti are published in the 20 x 21 cm format, and are generally 24 pages long. Some come out in collections, depending on the age level of readers.

Over the past years, many young illustrators have begun to borrow the voice and/or illustrations of children's comic books.

## II- Authors and Illustrators

In Haiti, children's literature is in the process of evolving. The first authors of works for children came from among the first people trained in 1998 during the workshop led by Véronique Tadjó. After each subsequent workshop, often led by various foreigners, were born more children's book authors. The genres are now fairly varied: picture books, first-readers, poetry. Theatre and documentary books are genres that ought to be explored. Certain young adult writers in Haiti choose the world of the picture book; others attempt to create first-readers. Given its importance in fostering children's imaginations, the picture book is a genre still in need of exploration in Haiti.

Some children's book writers also write works for adults. They attempt to exploit this new genre in order to allow children to begin the process of learning to read. Some adapt their own works or those of others for children. Others choose to translate works by foreign authors. *Ti Prens lan*<sup>10</sup> by Gary Victor, for example, is a Haitian Creole translation of *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. There are authors who do not publish children's books but instead host programs for children, creating marvelous characters such as *Djamina*<sup>11</sup> by Gary Victor.

Children's book illustrators are not very numerous in Haiti. The best known of our illustrators is Djasmy Chevelin Pierre<sup>12</sup>. His illustrations fascinate young readers as well as adults. In 2008 he was chosen for IBBY's Honor List for his illustrations<sup>13</sup>. He was one of the illustrators trained in 1998 by Véronique Tadjó. Since then, he has worked with the Éditions Deschamps, which is now Éditha. Other illustrators also produce praise-worthy work. Their

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<sup>10</sup> A Creole translation of *Le Petit Prince (The Little Prince)*. This work has also been translated into the Creoles of Martinique, Guadeloupe, etc. See: [http://www.potomitan.info/bibliographie/petit-prince\\_haiti.php](http://www.potomitan.info/bibliographie/petit-prince_haiti.php).

<sup>11</sup> A series for children published in *Le Petit Nouvelliste* around the year 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Chevelin Pierre's website: <http://chevelinpierre.illustrateur.org/>.

<sup>13</sup> IBBY Honor List 2008: [http://www.ibby.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/HL\\_Content\\_2008\\_RZ.pdf](http://www.ibby.org/fileadmin/user_upload/HL_Content_2008_RZ.pdf).

works attract the attention of children and prompt them to touch the book, even those who are not from a culture of reading. We cannot forget, for example, the creations of Teddy Kesser Mombrun<sup>14</sup>, (the caricatures of *Le Nouvelliste*<sup>15</sup>), and Jerry Boursiquot<sup>16</sup>, who himself published his caricatures in the newspaper *Le Matin*.

As with Haitian literature for adults, a large number of Haitian children's book writers are now living in the Diaspora, in countries like France, Canada, and the United States. Among them are Dany Laferrière<sup>17</sup>, Margaret Papillon<sup>18</sup>, Edwige Danticat<sup>19</sup>, Marie-Célie Agnant<sup>20</sup>...

### III- Haitian Publishers

In Haiti, publishers specializing in children's picture books are few. There are Éditha, Communication plus, the Éditions Université Caraïbe, Éditions du Canapé Vert, Éditions Choucouné, Kopivité-L'Action sociale, the Éditions Livrets Méthodistes and the Éditions Sabine Boisson.

Publications for children are beginning to slow. Children cannot procure books, due to their lack of means. Others are disinterested, due to the lack of a culture of reading. After the earthquake, there was a great lull in the production and publication of children's books. This year, on May 12, 2012, for the "Fête du livre jeunesse" (The Celebration of the Children's

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<sup>14</sup> Creator of the series *Alain Possible* published in *Ticket Magazine du Nouvelliste*.

<sup>15</sup> A daily newspaper in Haiti: <http://www.lenouvelliste.com/>.

<sup>16</sup> Jerry Boursiquot, a champion of caricature. Interview with the newspaper *Le Matin*, collected texts by Walter P. Comeau. <http://www.lematinhaiti.com/contenu.php?idtexte=29716>.

<sup>17</sup> A contemporary Haitian author who lives in Montreal. He has written books for both children and adults. *La fête des morts* (The Day of the Dead) and *Je suis fou de Vava* (I'm Crazy for Vava) are his two children's books.

<sup>18</sup> A contemporary Haitian author living in the Diaspora. She writes novels for children.

<sup>19</sup> A contemporary Haitian author living in the Diaspora. After the earthquake she wrote a children's book entitled *Eight Days: A Story of Haiti*, published in 2010 by Orchard Books. This book was translated into French (*Huit jours : un enfant à Haïti*) by Héléne Pelotto and illustrated by Alix Delinois.

<sup>20</sup> A Haitian writer and storyteller living in Quebec. She also writes works for children.

Book), editors produced more than 30 new titles. Two years after the earthquake, authors, illustrators and children's book editors continue to draw children towards reading.

#### **IV- Reading Activities and Events**

Since 1998, events have been held in Haiti every year. There are various activities for children. The first library to open an area for children was the Multimedia Library of the French Institute, with access to multimedia resources. After the workshop led by Véronique Tadjó, it began to hold activities for children. The activities took into account the varying ages of the children. "L'Heure du conte" (Story Hour) was aimed at children aged three to ten. Each Saturday, the librarian told a story to the children. Picture books written by Haitian authors were privileged, in order to familiarize children with the literary and cultural world of their country. Other albums considered as classics on an international level were also chosen for the Story Hour, and meetings with children's authors and illustrators were organized regularly. The other age group taken into account was ten and above. Each second Saturday of the month, a reading club met up at the Multimedia Library. The objective was to encourage them to read Haitian and/or foreign works. Short first-reader novels were at the heart of the literary discussions. Meetings with authors were also organized for the occasion.

After the Multimedia Library, the Monique Calixte library of the FOKAL also opened a children's section. It is a relatively new space, but nevertheless receives children from both neighboring areas and areas farther away. After the Multimedia Library of the French Institute was closed down for good following the earthquake, the Monique Calixte library became the only space more-or-less equipped for children. Special activities for children are organized there regularly.

There is a category of children, however, who are unable to gain access to reading: those who are illiterate and who do not have access to education. The children of provinces that are far away from the capital cannot gain access to reading either. We cannot, on the other hand, neglect the work done by the Direction Nationale du Livre (DNL) through its network for readings in underprivileged areas and in the provinces (les CLAC), by FOKAL, through its network of libraries directed by the Library Program, as well as the initiatives of the National Library in conjunction with the municipal libraries and those of the French embassy in Haiti with the placement of Alliances Françaises in many areas of the country. These are all of the organizations currently working so that reading can have a place in forming the imaginations of children in Haiti.

## V- The Celebration of the Children's Book

An audience of children during an event at the Celebration of the Children's Book in May 2011.



On May 4, 2001, an initiative was taken by the Éditions Henri Deschamps and by children's book authors and illustrators to encourage the production of children's literature and to encourage children to read. To this end, they organized a day baptized the "Fête du livre jeunesse" (The Celebration of the Children's Book). During the first celebration, many timid or discouraged authors contacted publishers in order to re-embark in their writing. The objective of the initiative was not only to encourage the evolution and development of this new form of writing, by also to *"attract a large number of children, encouraged by their parents, who will*

*come to stock up on books for pleasure at half price, thanks to the generosity of several sponsors” to quote Ms. Franck Paul<sup>21</sup>.*

The children arrived in hoards, for in addition to the sale of books at half price, they were able to attend events lasting all day. In different stands, they were able to meet authors and illustrators. To cite Sabine Boisson<sup>22</sup> it was *“the opportunity to gather together in the same place, on the same day, authors and readers, children and adults, parents and friends. Skits, readings, contests, stories, songs and puppets, the Celebration of the Children’s Book is all that and much more, all under the large activity tent.”*

## **VI- The Situation Post-Earthquake**

After the earthquake, many families took refuge in camps while waiting for help from the State and the international community. Their homes were destroyed, and they no longer had any leisure area. They questioned themselves about the future and were in a state of profound despair. At this critical moment, the French association “Bibliothèque Sans Frontières”<sup>23</sup> (Library Without Borders) took the initiative to bring books (picture books, novels...) into



camps for children to read. Volunteers were dispersed into various camps where they held events for children and left the books with them. They began the project “la Boîte à histoire” (the Story Box) which is the act *“of bringing books and reading nearer to children while offering them the possibility of telling stories to each other and stimulating their imaginations through activities, games*

Library of the camp in Tabarissa, Tabarre.

<sup>21</sup> Ms. Franck Paul is an author, educator and editor of children’s books.  
«<http://www.lenouvelliste.com/article.php?PubID=1&ArticleID=104994> ».

<sup>22</sup> Educator and children’s book author.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.bibliosansfrontieres.org>.

*and exercises*”<sup>24</sup>. This truly helped children who were in despair due to the situation after the earthquake. Among the books they brought were Haitian and foreign picture books for children, story books for the youngest children, and short novels for adolescents.

In the domain of publication and production, there was a lull. A deep anxiety was pervasive among professionals, who questioned themselves about the future of the country and of literary and artistic production in particular.

The Direction Nationale du Livre began a program in July 2010 entitled “*Un livre à la maison*” (A Book at Home) which was led by the Congolese writer Alain Mabanckou. This program consisted of going into villages, especially those with no library, picking out a number of young people, and giving each one of them a book that would be their own responsibility. After they finished reading the book, they were required to pass it on to others.

## **VII- The Picture Book: A Tool For Advancing Reading**

In March 2009, the Cultural Service of the French Embassy in Haiti began a series of training workshops led by Odette Charreyron-Michel for the librarians of the Alliances Françaises, the Multimedia Library of the French Institute, and for French teachers from certain schools in the capital and in the provinces. The objective was to use picture books as a tool for allowing children to learn to read through activities and in language classes. The training lasted one week. The participants (librarians and teachers) worked with a number of picture books which they were then to use in the context of their respective events and activities.

Since then, picture books have been, for the most part, used as a tool for advancing reading.

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<sup>24</sup> ‘Le contenu de la Boîte à histoires’, in *La Boîte à histoires : Guide de l’animateur*. Bibliothèques Sans Frontières et UNICEF, 2012, p. 16-19.

## VIII- The Study for the IFLA Project “The World Through Picture Books”

With the goal of creating a list of picture books from around the world chosen by different children’s librarians, the Libraries for Children and Young Adults section of IFLA<sup>25</sup> launched a project entitled “The World Through Picture Books”. The project aims to help in creating greater familiarity with children’s literature from the member countries of the International Federation. Librarians were to choose a list of ten picture books for children published in their country, and in the native language.

For the Caribbean, I made a list of picture books and stories published in Haiti and/or outside of Haiti by Haitian authors and which were popular in the events held at the Multimedia Library of the French Institute of Haiti and in other children’s areas. I chose those picture books that were effective during the “Story Hour” sessions and in the Reading Club as a tool for advancing reading.

Next, I sent this list of around 30 titles to the individuals that I know who lead events for



Training for event leaders of the Multimedia library and of the Alliances Françaises.

children in Haiti. The instructions given to them were to add to the list the picture books that were the most influential or captivating to children. They could also add to the list any titles they knew which, from their perspective, captured children’s attention during activities and events.

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.ifla.org/en/libraries-for-children-and-ya>.

Two people were able to respond in time. The first was Adelyne Pinchinat. She is currently in charge of the Bibliotheque Apprenants of the French Institute of Haiti. The Bibliotheque Apprenants is a space for consultation and reading for language teachers (teachers of DELF, DALF...) of the Institute. She is also in charge of the digital library put in place by Library Without Borders in partnership with the Education Offices of the University of Haiti. This is a space for the consultation of digitized documents created to respond to the need for access to information and documents first-and-foremost of the students of the University of Haiti, but also of students in the private sector, after the destruction of libraries during the natural disaster of January 12, 2010.

There was also Fleurette Tessonno, a student in M2 Library Science at the EBAD (École des Bibliothécaires Archivistes et Documentalistes de Dakar<sup>26</sup>) from afar. She is the former director of the library of the Alliances Françaises of Les Cayes. She is the founder of FONDART in which a reading club for adolescents was launched in the south of the country. Since the earthquake, she has worked at the library of the University Notre Dame of Haiti in Port-au-Prince.

Gessy Tessier also participated in the study. She is the former manager of the children's section of the Multimedia Library of the French Institute of Haiti. She left the Multimedia Library in October 2007. She is currently a librarian in the Miami-Dade Public Library System, in the Little River Library.

The picture books I have chosen were published between 1998 and 2010. Other colleagues here have proposed certain titles which came out in 2011 which are also essential and excellent picture books. The year 2012 was not taken into account in this study, for at the time the study was carried out, the new titles had not yet been published. During the

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.ebad.ucad.sn/>.

Celebration of the Children's Book we spotlighted 30 new titles which we will integrate into the list shortly.

We have gathered together our choices, and we chose the ten picture books below.

## **IX- The Selection**

NB : the presentations of the works were taken from the journal Takam Tikou<sup>27</sup>

Odette Roy Fombrun

Chevelin Djasmy Pierre, ill.



**Odette Roy Fombrun raconte Bouqui et Malice [Odette Roy Fombrun tells Bouqui and Malice]**

Éditha, 2011

ISBN 978-99935-95885-5

Bouquin the naïf uncle and Malice the cunning, teasing nephew are the most popular characters in Haitian folktales. The tales were nourished by the cultures of the various peoples on the island: Native Americans, Spanish, French, Africans... The adventures of Bouqui and Malice are told here in a very lively way, and dialogues are rich in Haitian Creole expressions. The author has set her tales in daily life, the market, the celebrations... Lots of fun at the expense of poor Bouqui!

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<sup>27</sup> <http://takamtikou.bnf.fr>; <http://lajoieparleslivres.bnf.fr> (bibliothèque numérique) ; Takam Tikou : recherche par titre.

Clélie Aupont

Rodchield Lamothe, ill.



**Drôle de Ratutu! [Funny Ratutu!]**

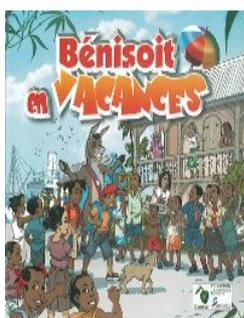
Éditha, 2011

ISBN : 978-99935-95908-8

The rats have serious misgivings about the cats of the nearby town, who want to eat them. A young couple of rats return from their honeymoon with a baby, Ratutu, who is obviously not like other little rats. His parents hide him under a big hat – how strange! – and they cut off his whiskers regularly... But instinct will eventually speak, and the hoax will be revealed. What if rats and cats learned to live together? A good story delivering a message in a light manner, accompanied by expressive illustrations.

Marlène Étienne

Chevelin Djasmy Pierre, ill.



**Bénisoit en vacances [Bénisoit on holidays]**

Éditha, 2011

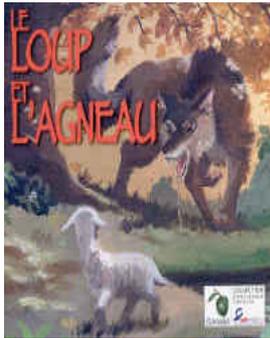
ISBN 978-99935-95861-1

Bénisoit the donkey is the hero of several amusing stories by Marlène Étienne. In this one, Bénisoit accompanies the children to the boat that will take them to Gonâve island for their holidays. But Bénisoit intends to go on holidays too. He jumps on board and does one silly thing after the other. Damage must be paid for. The children, remembering Bénisoit's gift for dancing, put on a show and give the donkey his stage name: Jakel Makson. Pictures of Jackel

dancing in the famous Michael's style are irresistibly funny. Chevelin Djasmy Pierre, in his style reminiscent of comics, has great talent for giving life to his characters. A picture book exuding good humor. Other titles of the series : *Bénisoit en tap tap* (2001); *Bénisoit à Miami* (2003); *Bénisoit et le père Noël* (2008).

Maël Fouchard

Chevelin Djasmy Pierre, ill.



**Le Loup et l'agneau [The Wolf and the Lamb]**

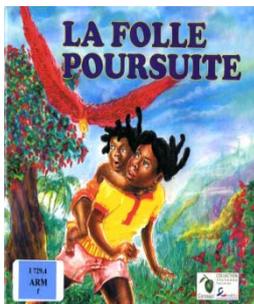
Éditha, 2009

ISBN 978-99935-95-71-7

Maël Fouchard gives a very free version of La Fontaine's fable "The Wolf and the Lamb", spiced with some Creole words. It is a pleasure to discover the beautiful paintings by Chevalin Djasmy Pierre. By the same author, illustrated by Stanley Leriche with montage and collage, a free version of "The Cicada and the Ant".

Ilona Armand

Chevelin Djasmy Pierre, ill.



**La Folle poursuite [The Wild Chase]**

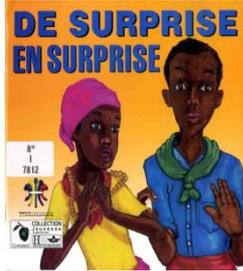
Éditha, 2008

ISBN 978-99935-95885-5

Christo has escaped his big sister's surveillance: Poulette can only watch him disappear, carried up into the air by a terrible malfini (a bird). She pursues him and is helped by a goat, and old man and an old woman... There is much humor in the text and in the images of this story built with repetitions, and with surprising, colorful characters.

Odette Roy Fombrun

Patrick Charles, ill.



**De surprise en surprise [Surprises]**

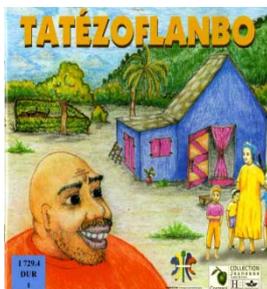
Hachette-Deschamps, 2001

ISBN 99935-31-11-1

Ti dane and Mercilia go to town for the first time with their uncle who wants them to see what carnival is like. The children soon get lost in the motley crowd. While looking for their uncle they discover the fascinating but also disturbing world of the parade. They end up finding their uncle, after dancing to the catchy rhythm of meringue. Very colourful illustrations show the different carnival costumes and other details of this important event.

Tamara Durand

M arc-Yves Deshauteur, ill.



**TatézoFlambo**

Hachette-Deschamps, 2005

ISBN 99935-31-46-4

A very cruel man beats and starves his wife and children. If only they knew this heartless man's name, he would burst into pieces! One after the other, the children find out his name but... they quickly forget it. Sito, the youngest child, does remember it. Coloured pencil illustration, expressive and with child-like grace for this well-told folktale on the subject of family violence, which happens in all social classes today.

Dany Laferrière

Frédéric Normandin, ill.



### **La Fête des morts [The Day of the Dead]**

Éditions de la Bagnole, 2009

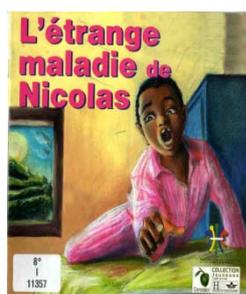
ISBN 978-2-92342-27-6

Da, the wonderful grandmother of the small boy Vieux Os, has in her garden an old tomb. There lies mister Labastère, who still takes part in everyday life: Marquis the dog takes his nap there, and the pot of good Haitian coffee, subtle and light, steams on the tombstone. There are no frontiers between life and death, especially on the Day of the Death. And when one thinks of dead people with tenderness and affection, they go on living in our hearts. A cheerful picture book, full of color.

Also by Dany Laferrière : *Je suis fou de Vava* (Éditions de la Bagnole: 2010)

Bernadette Saint-Paul

Réginald Nazaire, ill.



### **L'Étrange maladie de Nicolas [Nicolas's strange illness]**

Hachette Deschamps, 2006

ISBN 99935-31-41-3

Nicolas, who usually talks so much, is no longer himself: he does not open his mouth no matter what his teacher, the school headmaster, the doctor, the psychologist, the soothsayer or the healer say or do... But one morning his problems are over, in spite of a missing tooth... A well-built picture book, with illustrations full of charm and fine observation.

Maël Fouchard

Bérénice F. Baussan, ill.



**La Grosse voix du rakbwa [Rakbwa's gruff voice]**

Editha, 2009

ISBN 978-99935-95-75-5

The three children are scared. From a very dark part of the garden, they hear a gruff voice howling, “spitting yellow sputter and green sputter”. They discover a kind toad that will finally become their friend. Illustrations, in the style of those made by children, are cheerful and amusing, in line with a lively text, with welcome repetitions, playing with sounds and subtly blending French and an inventive and funny Creole.

## **Conclusion**

Ultimately, the picture book is a genre that awaits much development in Haiti. We witnessed a remarkable evolution of in the production of the genre during the years 1998-2011, despite the extremely difficult sociopolitical context in the country and the horrible natural disasters.

It will be important to integrate the reading of picture books into the school curriculum and to organize events and activities during class hours. Other types of picture books need to be created in order to provide young readers with a diversity of subjects which can follow them in their process of mental development and the development of their imaginations. We cannot finish this work without calling for help from the numerous Haitian children's writers and illustrators. Reading is an essential element for learning; let us provide children with varied and captivating literature.

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