

Edwidge Danticat Society Panel – at SAMLA Conference, Nov 4-6, 2016

Name of organization: Edwidge Danticat Society

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Haiti Needs New Narratives: Literary and Critical Responses to Persistent ‘Disaster Zone’ Discourse

There is a Haitian phrase that describes the nation as being on *tè glise*, slippery ground. This condition is the effect of Haiti’s many historical and contemporary catastrophes, both natural and (inter)national. Haiti has been beset by not only hurricanes and earthquakes, but also economic struggles after the revolution that freed the slaves and rocked the West, which persist under the further influence of U.S. imperialism and occupation and the devastating Duvalier dictatorships.

However, literary authors and scholars are working to challenge narratives of Haiti that serve to freeze the Caribbean nation in an ahistorical dystopia of sorts, a disaster zone from which it can’t seem to recover. For instance, Martin Munro’s work *Tropical Apocalypse* examines apocalypse discourse by historicizing the events that have shaped the current state of the nation, and Gina A. Ulysse’s *Why Haiti Needs New Narratives* presents a collection of pieces that examine the ways in which Haiti’s representations are rhetorically and culturally constituted from outside of its culture.

The Edwidge Danticat Society invites papers that address the discourse around Haiti as a “disaster zone” or a dystopia and seek to engage with this discourse through examinations of the ways in which literature and criticism propose alternative Haitian realities and imaginaries. We especially welcome papers addressing the work of Danticat and other authors of the Haitian *dyaspora*.

By May 20, 2016, please submit a brief biography, 300 word abstract (please include working title) and a/v needs to Maia L. Butler, University of Louisiana at Lafayette at maia.butler@edwidedanticatsociety.org.

All presenters, chairs, and moderators must be members of Edwidge Danticat Society. Membership information can be found on the EDS website at www.edwidedanticatsociety.org.