

Interview of Emerante De Pradines by Watson Denis
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Watson: N ap di bonswa oubyen bonjou. Sa depann de a ki lè moun yo ap koute nou. Mwen menm mwen se Watson Denis. Mwen se istoryen, mwen pwofesè lan linivèsite d Eta d Ayiti. Men, deplizanpli mwen enterese avèk antropoloji, mwen enterese avèk kesyon lakilti. Jodi a nou gen yon plezi, yon grap plezi, anpil plezi pou nou resevwa yon atis entènasyonal. Se yon ayisyèn ki fè non li nan kesyon dans, nan kesyon chante. Li rele Emerante De Pradines. N ap gen yon entèvyou avèk li sou karye li, sou vi li, vi li kòm atis. M p ap pale plis, se li menm ki ka pral di nou kòman vi li prezante kòm atis, kòm chantè. Bonjou, Emerante De Pradines.

Emerante De Pradines: Bonjou Msye Watson.

Watson: Nou chita aswè a, oubyen aprèmidi a, nan yon bèl kay. Nou nan otèl Olofsòn, Ayiti. Se youn nan otèl istorik ki genyen nan vil Pòtoprens. Moun ki poko vin ann Ayiti, moun tou ki vin Ayiti ki poko desann nan otèl Olofsòn, mwen envite yo pou vin nan otèl sa. Mwen vle di se plezi mwen genyen pou nou chita la, pou nou koze ak atis, Emerante De Pradines. Emerante, premye bagay mwen ta renmen nou fè, pou moun ki pa konnen w, menm pou moun ki konnen w ki ta bezwen konnen ti detay, mwen ta bezwen w pale de ou, kiyès ou ye. Kiyès ki Emerante De Pradines?

Emerante: Enbyen, Emerante De Pradines se pitit Kandyò, se te non atis li. Li te rele August De Pradines. Donk, mwen memm mwen se Emerante De Pradines. Mwen te marye avèk yon mesye ki te rele Mòs. Gen de lè mwen di li, gen de lè m mete non l, men gen de lè m pa mete non l, tout tan. Paske fò m di ou kisa ki laverite, mwen se yon moun ki toujou renmen non m. M renmen non m.

Watson: Non manman w ak papa w te bay ou?

Emerante: Non manman papa m te ban mwen, mwen renmen l anpil. Donk, afè atis la, m pa kwè

Watson: Good evening or good morning. This depends on when the people are watching us. My name is Watson Denis. I'm an historian; I'm a professor at the State University of Haiti. But, recently I've been interested in anthropology; I'm interested in questions concerning culture. Today, we have the pleasure, the great pleasure to receive an international artist. She's a Haitian who made her name in the dance realm, in singing. Her name is Emerante De Pradines. We'll interview her about her career, her life, her life as an artist. I won't say more, she's the one who's going to tell you about her life as an artist, as a singer. Good morning, Emerante De Pradines.

Emerante De Pradines: Good morning Mr. Watson.

Watson: This evening, rather this afternoon, we sit in a beautiful house. We are at the Hotel Oloffson in Haiti. It's one of the historic hotels in the city of Port-Au-Prince. People who haven't been to Haiti, and also people who've been to Haiti, but who haven't been to the Hotel Oloffson, I invite you to come to this hotel. I want to say that it's a pleasure for us to be here and chat with the artist, Emerante De Pradines. Emerante, the first thing I would like for to do, for those who don't know you, and even for those who do know you but would like to know more, I would like you to talk about yourself, who you are. Who is Emerante De Pradines?

Emerante: Well, Emerante De Pradines is the child of Kandyò, which was his artistic name. His name was August De Pradines. Well, my name is Emerante De Pradines. I was married to a man named Mòs. Sometimes I say it, sometimes I put his name; sometimes I don't put his name. Because I have to tell you the truth, I'm someone who's always loved my name. I love my name.

Watson: The name your mother and father gave you?

Emerante: The name my mother's father gave me, I really love it. Well, about being an artist, I don't

se yon bagay moun chwazi. Se bagay, se ar la menm ki chwazi w, paske lè ou se yon atis, ou fèt konsa.

Watson: Oke.

Emerante: Ou gen yon lòt konpòtman. Ou gen yon konpòtman ke lòt moun pa genyen e ou toujou gen tandans fè sa w vle e sa w pito, e sa w renmen e jan w renmen l.
Donk, se konsa...

Watson: Se kòmsi ar l ap mennen w?

Emerante: Ap mennen w. Se ar la ki mennen nou se pa mwen ki mennen.

Watson: Oke, men depi ki lè ou kòmanse vi atistik ou? Depi ki lè ar la kòmanse mennen w?

Emerante: Enben depi m gen huit an, depi m gen konesans, m konnen. Lè m pa t ko gen konesans manman m te toujou di m, jou l te mennen m lekòl, epi sè la di m konsa, “qu'est-ce que tu sais faire?” epi m di “Je vais te montrer”, M ap montre w sa m kon fè. E alò mwen monte sou tab kote l t ap resevwa n lan epi mwen resite *Fonfon a bien lu sa leçon*.

Watson : Se te yon pwezi, se sa?

Emerante: Se te yon pwezi ke timoun konnen, manman m te monte m. Donk, m resite l pou mè a epi mè a di konsa “a, a, elle sera un petit rat dans l'opéra” epi m kontan epi m grandi men vrèman mwen menm, depi m ap kòmanse ap resite pwezi nan asosyasyon nan tout kote, m te gen huit an.

Watson: Oke.

Emerante: Epi gen yon lòt bagay ke m te konn fè ki te pwouve ke m t ap vin konsa, sa ke chak tan gen vakans, mwen òganize yon fèt teyatral ke pou ar timoun nan katye a...

Watson: Nan katye lakay ou?

Emerante: Epi pou nou fè l jou fèt mwen.

Watson: O oke.

think it's something someone chooses. It's something where the art chooses you, because when you're an artist, you're born that way.

Watson: Okay.

Emerante: You behave differently. You have behavior that other people don't have and you always have the tendency to do what you want and what you prefer, and what you like and how you like it. Well, it's like that...

Watson: It's as if the art is driving you?

Emerante: It's driving you. It's the art that's driving us; I'm not the one driving.

Watson: Okay, but when did you begin your artistic life? When did the art start driving you?

Emerante: Well, since I was eight, since I was old enough to understand, I knew. Before I was old enough to know, my mother always told me; the day she took me to school and the Sister said to me, “what do you do?” and I said “I'll show you; I'll show you what I can do.” Then I got up on the table where she was greeting us and I recited *Fonfon a bien lu sa leçon*.

Watson: It was a poem, right?

Emerante: It was a poem that children know; one that my mother taught me. Well, I recited it for the nun and the nun said “ahh, she will be a little rat in the opera” and I was happy and I grew up, but truly, ever since, I started reciting poetry; in associations all over; I was eight years old.

Watson: Okay.

Emerante: And there was something else I used to do that showed that I was going to be this way. It was during every vacation that I organized a theatrical party that was for [the art of] children in the neighborhood...

Watson: In the neighborhood where you lived?

Emerante: And for us to do it on my birthday.

Watson: Oh, okay.

<p>Emerante: M te renmen fete fèt mwen ki 24 septanm.</p> <p>Watson: Oke, dakò.</p> <p>Emerante: Alò m kontan fè sa epi...</p> <p>Watson: Nan fèt sa, nou danse, nou chante, nou manje?</p> <p>Emerante: Nou chante, nou danse epi je te trè, m te yon ti jan gen odas, m pa pè anyen, m pa pè moun. M toujou ap mache, fè tout sa m vle e si m wè m yon kote, m renmen l, m bezwen sa pou m fè yon fèt, m al mande w kareman. M di w “èske m mèt vin fè fèt lakay ou?” donk, se konsa sa kòmanse, m te tou piti. Epi yon lòt bagay m vin fè ankò, lè m te dwe gen douz an, m sonje Dominik Ipolit te ekri yon pyès epi li vin ban m jwe wòl la, lè l ban wòl la, m te kontan. Papa m kontan paske papa m di matant mwen ki yon sè papa m, li te kontan. <i>Le baiser de l’ailleule</i> pyès la te rele. Epi Prezidan Vincent di “m sonje ala la l te fè, te jwe pyès la. Yo di m ti le Pradines sa k ap vini an li bon. M pral wè kilès ki fè pi bon” epi li fè l, e apre sa...</p> <p>Watson: Men èske nou k ab di se apati de pyès sa ou te jwe a ke karye ou kòmanse de fason pwofesyonèl?</p> <p>Emerante: Se sa, de fason pwofesyonèl...</p> <p>Watson: Ki laj ou genyen lè sa?</p> <p>Emerante: M te gen douz an.</p> <p>Watson: Douz an, oke.</p> <p>Emerante: Depi a douz an m konnen vrèman m te yon moun ki ka jwe sou nenpòt sèn nenpòt kote mwen vle.</p> <p>Watson: Men ou t al nan lekòl [...]?</p> <p>Emerante: Ebyen fò m di sa vrè lekòl mwen se te yon glas. M renmen gade m nan glas, ou konprann? Mwen aprann tout sa m fè yo nan</p>	<p>Emerante: I loved to celebrate my birthday which is September 24th.</p> <p>Watson: Okay, understood.</p> <p>Emerante: And I was happy to do this and...</p> <p>Watson: At this party, you danced, you sang, you ate?</p> <p>Emerante: We sang, we danced and I was very...I was a bit audacious, I wasn't scared of anything, I wasn't scared of people. I was always walking, doing what I wanted and if I saw a place and I liked it, I needed it to throw a party, I'd promptly ask you. I'd say "can I come throw a party at your house?" so that's how that started, I was still little. And something else I used to do, when I was about twelve or so, I remember Dominique Hippolyte wrote a play and he gave me a role to play, when he gave me the role, I was happy. My father was happy because my father told my aunt whose one of my father's sisters, he was happy. The play was called <i>Le baiser de l'ailleule</i>. And President Vincent said "I remember they put on the play here. They tell me the little Pradines that's coming is good. I'm going to see who's better" and he did that, and after that...</p> <p>Watson: But can we say that your professional career started from this play that you acted in?</p> <p>Emerante: That's right, in a professional manner...</p> <p>Watson: How old were you at this time?</p> <p>Emerante: I was twelve.</p> <p>Watson: Twelve years old, okay.</p> <p>Emerante: Since I was twelve, I truly knew I was someone who could play any on any stage anywhere I wanted.</p> <p>Watson: But you went to school [...]?</p> <p>Emerante: Well I have to say that my true school was a mirror. I loved to look at myself in the mirror, you understand? I learned all the things I do</p>
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glas, jiskaske yon jou lè m vini, lè Prezidan Vincent wè ke jan m jwe pyès la, li twouve m te jwe l byen, li twouve ke petèt m pa te dwe rete kay mè yo, m te dwe ale nan lekòl nòmàl ki te dirije pa yon fransèz. Alò m te genyen, yon lekòl ki te pli ouvè donk, m vini, m ale anèks de lekòl nòmàl, paske lekòl nòmàl la, lè a m pa t ko gen laj pou m ale ladan. Donk, m ale nan anèks la epi m toujou ap wè, kontinye fè teyat, kontinye etidye epi etidye lakay avèk papa m, avèk [...] sa ke m renmen, sa ke m ap fè. E depi lè a fò m di w sa k la verite, kou yon moun gen yon pyès, li pote l m ban mwen pou m fè l. Sa m kontan, m toujou kontan sa.

Watson: Men lè sa, ou pa t jwe pou kòb?

Emerante: Non.

Watson: Se pa pou kòb? Se pou plezi?

Emerante: Se pa te pou kòb, se te pou plezi ou fè. Ou al nan seyans ou fè l, ou chante. M kwe premye fwa m di w m touche kòb, m te touche 6 dola. 6 dola yo ban mwen paske m t al jwe nan yon revè, te gen yon tan yo te fè anpil revè ann Ayiti.

Watson: Oke.

Emerante: Yo pa fè sa ankò.

Watson: Revè a se li kisa?

Emerante: Revè a se li kisa se ke moun lan pran de moun, li mete l kanpe epi l kanpe tout lòt moun ke moun kapab rekonèt, ou konprann? Yon moun ki gen yon talan, yon moun ki gen yon tik, yon moun ki kapab fè yon bagay, yon moun fou, yon atis, yon lòt atis.

Watson: Yon sòt de konpetisyon, yon “talent show”?

Emerante: Se sa, “talent show” se le mot. Alò yo pase nan revè, li toujou gen anpil moun, e li toujou gen anpil siksè donk m pase, m jwe ladan yo, m toujou kontan.

in a mirror, until one day when I came, when President Vincent saw how I played in the play, he saw that I played my part well; he thought that I shouldn't stay at the nuns' house, I should go to a high school that was directed by a Frenchman. So I had a school; a school that was more open, so I went. I went to the annex of the high school, because the high school, at the time I wasn't old enough to attend it. So, I went to the annex and I continued to see, continued to do theatre, continued to study and study at the house with my father, with [...] which I loved, what I was doing. And since that time, I have to tell you honestly, when someone had a play, they'd bring it to me so I could do it. I was happy for that, I was always happy for that.

Watson: But at that time, you didn't act in plays for money?

Emerante: No.

Watson: It wasn't for money? It was for fun?

Emerante: It wasn't for money, I did it for fun. You go to the session, you do it, you sing. I think the first time I got paid, I got paid 6 dollars. They gave me 6 dollars because I played at a review; there was a time when they had a lot of reviews in Haiti.

Watson: Okay.

Emerante: They don't do this anymore.

Watson: What exactly is a review?

Emerante: The review is where the person takes two people; they stand them next to other people that the public can recognize. Someone who has talent, someone who has a trick, someone who can do something, someone crazy, an artist, another artist.

Watson: A kind of competition, a talent show?

Emerante: That's it, talent show is the word. So they would go to reviews, there was always a lot of people, and it always had a lot of success so I would go, I'd compete, I was always happy.

Watson: Pandan w ap pale la ou fè mosyon de Prezidan Lesko, kòman w gen aksè ak prezidan Lesko?

Emerante: Non, Prezidan Vincent.

Watson: Wi, Prezidan Vincent. Kòman ou te aksè li?

Emerante: Enbyen Prezidan Vincent se t on zanmi papa m lontan. M pa konn kijan men li te zanmi fanmi an. Li te toujou lakay, li te toujou... dabò lè l vin prezidan, li voye chèche youn nan ti kouzin mwen yo ki te sekretè l, konprann pitit sè papa m. Donk nou te gen anpil relasyon, relasyon de fanmi.

Watson: Lè ke ou kòmanse vi pwofesyonèl ou, èske w gen yon bagay anvan w jwe, ou fè? Èske gen yon bagay ki enspire w? Pou w kapab mye w sou sèn nan?

Emerante: Sèl bagay ke m konnen ki te, ke m fè tout tan se ke jou m pral jwe a, m pa renmen pal a moun.

Watson: Wi, pou w kapab konsantre sou sa w pral fè a?

Emerante: M pa konn si se pou m konsantre nan sa m pral fè a, men m pa nan komunikasyon e lè m vin pi gran, lè m vini vrèman pwofesyonèl, moun envite m, m pa renmen yon moun envite m pou m nan ni nan bwè, manje tout bagay sa yo, se pou m mwen menm rete pou kò mwen jiskaske m al monte sou sèn nan, m pa al nan komunikasyon ak moun.

Watson: Dakò.

Emerante: M te toujou fè sa. Se sa... sa se te mwen. Okipe de rad mwen, okipe de sa m pral mete. Sa toujou konsène m. Yon ti règ: moun nan ki ban m pyès la pa bezwen gen pou l kaporal avè l, m gen ide pa m.

Watson: Wi se sa. Ou antre nan pèsonaj la?

Emerante: Se sa, antre nan pèsonaj la, mwen konn

Watson: While you were talking you mentioned President Lescot, how did you gain access to President Lescot?

Emerante: No, President Vincent.

Watson: Yes, President Vincent. How did you reach him?

Emerante: Well, President Vincent was a longtime friend of my father's. I don't know how but he was a family friend. He was always at the house, he was always... When he first became president, he sent for one of my cousins who was his secretary, my father's sister's child. So we were closely related, through family.

Watson: When you started your professional life, did you have something you did before you acted? Did you have something that inspired you? So you could better yourself on the stage?

Emerante: The one thing I know I always did, was that on a day that I was going to do a play, I didn't like talking to people.

Watson: Yes, so you could concentrate on what you were going to do?

Emerante: I didn't know if it was to concentrate on what I was going to do, but I didn't talk, and when I got older, when I truly became a professional, people invited me [out]. I didn't like it when someone invited me [out] and I was drinking, eating all of these things. I had to keep to myself up until the moment when I went up on stage. I didn't talk to people.

Watson: I understand.

Emerante: I always did that. That was me. Preoccupied with my clothes; preoccupied with what I was going to wear. That always concerned me. A little rule: the person that gave me the play didn't need to be bossy about it, I had my own ideas.

Watson: Yes, that's it. You went into character?

Emerante: That's it, I went into character. I knew

kisa m pral mete, kisa m pral wè e kijan m pral gen piblik la. E gen yon lòt bagay ankò ki te nan mwen menm, se ke depi kou m montre sou sèn nan, twa minit p ap pase epi m santi piblik la avè m.

Watson: Oke.

Emerante: Koprann? M santi m ap fè sa m vle avè l [...] alò se do petèt ar la. Ou sonje m te di w ar la se li k mennen m? Donk, se li k ap mennen m kote m prale a. M pa mwen menm ankò. Jiskaske m fini se sa m santi.

Watson: Dako. Ou menm kòm atis, ou te jwe pyès teyat?

Emerante: Wi.

Watson: Ou danse, ou chante?

Emerante: Wi.

Watson. Se sa. Kisa ki te plis lakay ou? Kisa w te plis renmen? Ou te fè tout ansanm? Konman sa te ye?

Emerante: M fè tout ansamn. M renmen tout ansanm. M renmen teyat la anpil anpil, men lè m vin ale Ozetazini, kote m epanouyi, m marye yon pakèt bagay, mwen vin on ti jan sèf konsyans.

Watson: Oke.

Emerante: M konnen ke kou m ap pale moun pral di m, “kote w soti?”, alò sa, m pa t renmen l, m abandone teyat la akòz de sa epi m tonbe nan danse a, ak nan chante a. Alò sa m se a, m toujou chante chanson ayisyèn.

Watson: Chante fòklòrik.

Emerante: Chante peyi m se li m chante, se li m fè e m te toujou konnen tou, si m ap chante, si m chante yon chanson ou konnen kisa m ap fè paske m fè w konnen kisa m ap fè.

Watson: Donk, ou toujou chante? Kounya ou chante toujou?

what I was going to wear, what I was going to see and how I was going to capture the audience. And there was something else about me, once I got on the stage, three minutes didn't pass before I felt the audience was with me.

Watson: Okay.

Emerante: Understand? I felt like I was doing what I wanted with it [...] so it must have been the art. Remember I told you it was the art that drove me? Thus, it's what took me where I was going. I wasn't myself anymore. Up until I was finished, that's what I felt.

Watson: Understood. You as an artist, you acted in plays?

Emerante: Yes.

Watson: You danced, you sang?

Emerante: Yes.

Watson: That's it. Where did you feel more at home? What did you like the most? Did you do all of them together? How was that?

Emerante: I did all of them together. I like all of them together. I really really loved theater, but when I came to the United States, where I blossomed, I wove together many things; I became a bit self-conscious.

Watson: Okay.

Emerante: I knew once I started talking people would say, “where are you from?” so I didn't like this, I abandoned theater because of this and I fell into dance singing, so, who I was, I always sang Haitian songs.

Watson: Folklore songs.

Emerante: My country's songs are what I sang; that's what I did and what I always knew too, if I was singing a song, you knew what I was doing because I made you know what I was doing.

Watson: So, do you still sing? You still sing today?

Emerante: Non, kounya m pa chante toujou. M pa gen vwa.

Watson: Ou pa gen vwa ankò.

Emerante: M pa gen vwa ankò, m pa chante. Paske m te toujou di, m te wè de moun ke m te renmen anpil. M te konn wè yo jwe sou teyat, danse, fè teyat epi m konnen yo jèn. Yo do te gen 30, 40 an lè mwen menm mwen vin konnen yo. Epi lè yo vin gen 60 an, 70 an m di mwen, m p ap kite sa rive m, m ap soti ladan avan travay sa lè moun kontan wè m ap fè l. Ou pran plezi pou w gade l, ou kontan sa m ap fè a. Men pa pou w pè pou mwen pou m pa kraze, kwè m pa sa monte bagay la, m ap chèche kenbe. Men m pa renmen sa. Donk mwen soti, dabò depi lè m tounen an Ayiti, m remake ke mwen gen alèji ak pousyè ak tout bagay k ap pase ki pa bon nan peyi a. Donk, m pa chante paske m pa dwe chante apouvwa m pa dwe chante, ou konprann? Donk m toujou kite sa, men m toujou renmen l menm jan m te renmen l lè m te timoun.

Watson: Dakò. Men kou pou moun ki pa janm tande w chante, pou moun ki pa janm tande w chante, ou te ka chante yon ti chanson pou nou?

Emerante: Non, m pa ka fè sa, M p ap chante. Kòm mwen gen plak.

Watson: Oke.

Emerante: Mwen genyen bagay ou sa tande vwa a. Donk pa egzanp nan otèl la m kwè genyen vwa m, Gen vwa m la. Donk si Richa vle la jwe l pou nou, men mwen, m p ap chante, m p ap fè sa.

Watson: Enbyen, men ki pi gwo souvni w ou genyen kòm atis? Yon bagay ki make vi w kòm atis.

Emerante: M te jwe yon pyès de Roger Dorsainville ki te rele...

Watson: *Baryè*?

Emerante: *Baryè*. Lè m jwe *Baryè* nan ane karant.

Emerante: No, I don't sing anymore. I don't have the voice.

Watson: You don't have the voice anymore.

Emerante: I don't have the voice anymore, I don't sing. Because I always said, I saw two people who I liked a lot. I saw them act in theater, dance, do theater and I knew they were young. They must have been about 30 or 40 when I got to know them. And when they became around 60 or 70, I said to myself, I'm not going to let that happen to me, I'm leaving this work when people are still happy to see me do it. You take pleasure in watching it, [while] you're [still] happy with what I'm doing. But not for you to be scared that you're going to fail; thinking that I can't climb the thing and I'm [still] reaching to hold on. I didn't like this. So I left, at first, I returned to Haiti, I noticed that I had an allergy to the dust and all the other bad things that were going on in the country. So I didn't sing because I shouldn't sing, you understand? So I left this, but I always loved it in the same way I loved it when I was a child.

Watson: Understood, but for people who have never heard you sing, could you sing a little song for us?

Emerante: No, I can't do this, I won't sing. There are vinyl records.

Watson: Okay.

Emerante: I have things where you can hear my voice. For example in the hotel I think they have my voice there. So if Richard [Morse] wants, he'll play it for you, but me, I won't sing, I won't do this.

Watson: Well, what is the biggest souvenir you have as an artist? Something that marked your life as an artist?

Emerante: I acted in a Roger Dorsainville play that was called...

Watson: *Baryè*?

Emerante: *Baryè*. I played *Baryè* in 1940.

<p>Watson: Sou Lèsko.</p> <p>Emerante: Lèsko, enben m kwè pyès sa te fè yon revolisyon. Lè m jwe <i>Baryè</i> se te de fanmi. Yon fanmi nwa avèk yon fanmi milat. Ou te konnen l'?</p> <p>Watson: M konn li pyès la.</p> <p>Emerante: Ou konn li pyès la?</p> <p>Watson: M pot ko fèt, m li pyès la.</p> <p>Emerante: Ou li pyès la, enben lè nou jwe pyès sa nou tout ki te nan pyès la, bagay la te tèlman reyèl, parèt reyèl ke sa se yon revolisyon. Yo pa t kite nou pran ti repo. Nou jwe l sèlman m kwè yon fwa ou de fwa.</p> <p>Watson: [...] te fèmen.</p> <p>Emerante: Se sa.</p> <p>Watson: Donk se gwo evènman nan lavi w kòm atis la?</p> <p>Emerante: Pi gwo evènman nan lavi m...</p> <p>Watson: Ann Ayiti?</p> <p>Emerante: Ann Ayiti.</p> <p>Watson: E Lezetazini? Sa k make vi w kòm atis?</p> <p>Emerante: Ozetazini, sa k make vi m se yon jou yon moun mande m yon kote yo rele "Oakdale" yon "summer resort" ki rele "Oakdale", yo mande m pou m al fè, pou m chante la epi m chante epi m soti nan sèn nan, li te byen lwen epi m avanse, m mache epi tout san m ape tresayi alò sa te fè yon gwo enpresyon sou mwen. Li apre m gen yon zanmi m ki di m "m mèt di w, jan w avanse ou pa te kankou yon moun non, ou mache kankou yon espri k ap travèse, ki sot yon kote ap travèse tè a.</p> <p>Watson: Petèt Èzili te avè w lè sa?</p> <p>Emerante: M pa konnen, se do sa, e do sa.</p>	<p>Watson: Under Lescot.</p> <p>Emerante: Lescot. Well, I think the play was a revolution. When I played <i>Baryè</i> there were two families. A black family and a mulatto family. Did you see it?</p> <p>Watson: I read the play.</p> <p>Emerante: You read the play?</p> <p>Watson: I wasn't born yet but I read the play.</p> <p>Emerante: You read the play, well, when we put on this play, all of us who were in the play, it was so real, it seemed real that this was a revolution. They didn't let us rest. I think we only performed it once or twice.</p> <p>Watson: [...] closed.</p> <p>Emerante: That's it.</p> <p>Watson: So this was a big event in your life as an artist?</p> <p>Emerante: The biggest event in my life...</p> <p>Watson: In Haiti?</p> <p>Emerante: In Haiti.</p> <p>Watson: And in The United States? What marked your life as an artist?</p> <p>Emerante: In The United States, what marked my life is one day someone invited me to a place they called Oakdale, a summer resort called Oakdale. They asked me to go and sing there and I sang and I came off the stage, it was really far and I went, I walked and I got chills, so this made a big impression on me. It was after that I had a friend say to me "I should tell you, the way you walked, you weren't humanlike, you walked like a spirit that was crossing, that came from somewhere and was crossing across the land.</p> <p>Watson: Perhaps Erzulie was with you?</p> <p>Emerante: I don't know, she must have been, it</p>
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<p>M ap mande m si m te konn chante Èzili lè sa?</p> <p>Watson: Non, ou pa te...</p> <p>Emerante: Wi, m te konn chantè Èzili men m pa t janm te chantè Èzili ann Ayiti paske papa m te di m, m p ap chante Èzili toutotan l pa mouri.</p> <p>Watson: Oke.</p> <p>Emerante: Paske li menm, se li k te fè chanson sa. Li ekri chante a li te gen 14 an. Donk, se te chante l li te ye. M pa t sa chante l.</p> <p>Watson: Ou pa t ka chante l, dakò.</p> <p>Emerante: Epi se aprè, m fin ap chante toupatou, alò chante Vodouesk mwen yo epi sitou m renmen vokasyon yo, donk nan fin chante, nan chante chante sa m di “men papa m te di m lè l mouri m ape chantè Èzili, koulye a l mouri, m ap chantè Èzili. Epi chante a vini chante m tou, epi nenpòt ti kote m pase, m chante...</p> <p>Watson: Èzili nan dlo...bagay konsa?</p> <p>Emerante: Men, e sa. Alò sitou mwen menm lè m chante l la, m vin fè sèn posesyon an. Alò se kòm si m vin gen lwa a. Lwa monte m epi m pyafe m, m ponpe, m woule m, m danse epi m leve, epi m leve ankò. M reprann chante a. Donk, m remake se pa t yon bagay...</p> <p>Watson: Senp?</p> <p>Emerante: Se pa t yon bagay senp. Gen de bagay ou wè, ou santi jan le pati a li pase.</p> <p>Watson: Wi, sa ki pase?</p> <p>Emerante: E chak tan m tounen sa, menm timoun ki ap gade m ki lakay toujou te “ahh m te wè ou te gen lwa.”</p> <p>Watson: Sa vle di ou konn gen lwa?</p> <p>Emerante: M pa kwè.</p> <p>Watson: Ou pa kwè ou konn gen lwa?</p>	<p>must have been. I am asking myself if I used to sing [the song] “Erzulie” at that time?</p> <p>Watson: No you didn’t...</p> <p>Emerante: Yes, I used to sing “Erzulie” but I never sang “Erzulie” in Haiti because my father told me I couldn’t sing “Erzulie” until after he died.</p> <p>Watson: Okay.</p> <p>Emerante: Because he was the one who created that song. He wrote the song when he was 14. So, it was his song. I couldn’t sing it.</p> <p>Watson: You couldn’t sing it, understood.</p> <p>Emerante: And it was after. I ended up singing all over, my Vodouist songs, and I especially liked their vocation. So, at the end of the song, in singing the song I said “but my father told me when he died I’d sing “Erzulie,” so when he died, I sang “Erzulie.” And then the song became my song too, and every little place I went, I sang it.</p> <p>Watson: Erzulie in the water...something like that?</p> <p>Emerante: But, that’s it. So, especially when I sang that song, I began doing the possession scene. So it was as if I came under the power of the lwa. The lwa took me and I stomped, I jumped, I rolled, I danced and I got up, and I got up again. I retook the song. So, I remarked it wasn’t something...</p> <p>Watson: Simple?</p> <p>Emerante: It wasn’t something simple. Some things you see, you feel how the piece happened.</p> <p>Watson: Yes, what happened?</p> <p>Emerante: And everytime I became this way, even children who were watching who were at home would always say “ahh I saw that you had a lwa.”</p> <p>Watson: That means you did perform under the power of the lwa?</p> <p>Emerante: I don’t think so.</p> <p>Watson: You don’t think you used to be under lwa?</p>
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Emerante: Men, y ap di m sa sou sèn.

Watson: Sa sou sen?

Emerante: Sa sou sen.

Watson: Sa enteresan.

Emerante: Men konsa m vin chante Èzili.

Watson: Dakò.

Emerante: E alò, yon lòt bagay ankò, fò m di w kijan ke m vin fè sa. M al gade yon seremoni epi lè m soti nan seremoni an, mwen di “pèsonn pa vle wè bagay sa ann Ayiti. Pèsonn pa vle...” moun pa t konn gade sa lontan, yo pa te vle sa.

Watson: Wi, wi.

Emerante: Yo pa te vle sa nan peyi a. Enben mwen menm, apre m fin gade seremoni an, m di “a bagay sa m ap mennen l lavil” Epi se konsa m te gen yon “tape recorder” m pran l, m annik kòmanse kopye chante epi m di, “m ap mennen l lavil.” Epi m òganize yon fèt nan Rex epi m chante Vodou. [...] lè m chante sa, pèsonn pa vle tande sa la, dènye moun...

Watson: se [...] yo fache.

Emerante: Yo fache, yo pa kontan. Yo pa kontan.

Watson: Yo pa kontan.

Emerante: Men, kote lè yo di w atis la, paske ou kontan m chante se trè byen m pa chante pou ou, m ap chante pou mwen. M chante pou mwen, m chante paske m renmen chante a, m wè l, m renmen l, m pote l lavil, m vle denye moun konn chante, konn tande Vodou. Chante kisa m ap chèche, m chwazi yo, m pran yo epi m pote yo, epi m chante. Epi jis m tèlman chante ke apre lè yo wè m, yo di m “a ou fè m tande bagay sa” se ou k vle tande l, men mwen menm, mwen renmen l, mwen renmen l, mwen renmen l. E m renmen tout.

Emerante: But, they told me that on the stage.

Watson: That on stage?

Emerante: That on stage.

Watson: That’s interesting.

Emerante: But that’s how I came to sing “Erzulie.”

Watson: Understood.

Emerante: And so, another thing also, I have to tell you how I came to do this. I went to watch a ceremony and when I left the ceremony, I said “no one wants to see this in Haiti. No one wants to...” people didn’t used to watch this long ago, they didn’t want that.

Watson: Yes, yes.

Emerante: They didn’t want that in the country. Well me, after I watched the ceremony, I said “I’m bringing this to the city” and I had a tape recorder, I took it, I started copying songs and I said “I’m bringing it to the city. And I organized a party in Rex and I sang Vodou. [...] when I sang this, no one wanted to hear it, every one...”

Watson: It’s [...] they were mad.

Emerante: They were mad, they weren’t happy. They weren’t happy.

Watson: They weren’t happy.

Emerante: But, when they say you’re an artist, if you’re [audience] is happy with what I sing, that’s great, but, I don’t sing for you, I sing for me. I’m singing for myself, I sing because I like the song, I saw it, I liked it, I brought it to the city, I want everyone to know the song, to hear Vodou. The songs that I look for, I choose them, I take them and I bring them, and I sing. And I sing to the point that after they’ve seen me, they say “ahh, you made me listen to this,” you’re the one who wanted to listen to it, but me, I love it, I love it, and I love all of it.

<p>Watson: Oke. Men nan peryòd sa w ap chante Vodou, ou mennen Vodou a nan lavil, ou mennen l nan Rex la e nou nan peryòd rejete nan lezane 1940 non?</p> <p>Emerante: Se sa, nou nan peryòd rejete. Alò peryòd rejete sa m sonje Dr. Maximilian, tout moun sa yo, yo jete dènye bagay, gen bagay moun sere, gen bagay moun gade, yo pote lakay yo, men yo pa te vle sa. E alò an fin rejete sa tou, si m timoun, paske lè m ap di w sa m pa t gran non. Lè m ap di w sa. M gen...</p> <p>Watson: 15 an, 16 an?</p> <p>Emerante: 14 an. M fè sa apre manman m mouri. Si manman m te la m pa ta kab al nan Vodou, paske manman m te trè relijye, li pa te vle bagay sa. Men sa pwouve nou tou, se yon vrè relijyon, paske malgre tout traka yo ba li, tout bagay yo fè, li la. Li kenbe.</p> <p>Watson: E sa, e sa. Paske li antre nan lafanmi?</p> <p>Emerante: Li antre dan lafanmi. Tout timoun kouleya gen dwa fè l. Denye moun ap danse Yanvalou. Dabò, m gen yon zanmi m ki rele Florans, Gildrès Florans.</p> <p>Watson: Yon atis sou pent?</p> <p>Emerante: Sa, li pa penn non li se yon...</p> <p>Watson: Ah antwopològ oke, m kwè li ekri tou, non?</p> <p>Emerante: Li ekri. Li ekri li se yon mizikològ.</p> <p>Watson: Mizikològ.</p> <p>Emerante: Epi li jwe mizik, li fè mizik. Epi li di m konsa "men w pa konnen tout moun..." li fè yon konferans tou dènyèman li di "tout moun, tout Ayisyen te dwe konnen sa k rele yon Yanvalou, yon Mayi, yon Dahomen. Yo fèt pou te konnen l paske si w pa fè sa, ou pa Ayisyen." Tandè ke Ayisyen lontan pè bagay sa.</p>	<p>Watson: Okay, but in this period of time you're singing Vodou, you brought Vodou to the city, you brought it to the Rex and this was in the rejection period in the 1940s, no?</p> <p>Emerante: That's it; we were in the rejection period. Thus this rejection period I remembered Dr. Maximilian, all those people, they threw away everything, there were things people hid, there were things people saw, they brought to their houses, but they didn't want this. So, at the end of the rejection, I was a child because at the time I was...</p> <p>Watson: 15, 16?</p> <p>Emerante: 14 years old. I did this after my mother died. If my mother was there, I couldn't have gone to Vodou [ceremonies] because my mother was very religious, she didn't want that. But that proves to us too that it's a true religion because despite all the trouble they give it, all the things they did, it's here. It's held on.</p> <p>Watson: That's true, that's true. Because it enters through family?</p> <p>Emerante: It enters into family. All the children now can do it. Everyone dances Yanvalou. Actually, I have a friend named Florans, Gildrès Florans.</p> <p>Watson: A painter?</p> <p>Emerante: She's not a painter she's a...</p> <p>Watson: Ahh, an anthropologist, okay, I think she writes too, no?</p> <p>Emerante: She writes, she's a musicologist.</p> <p>Watson: Musicologist.</p> <p>Emerante: And she plays music, she makes music and she told me "but you don't know everyone..." she had a conference recently and she said "Everyone, every Haitien should know Yanvalou, Mayi, Dahomen [types of Vodou dances]. They need to know because if they don't, they're not Haitian." Meaning Haitians long ago were scared of this.</p>
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<p>Watson: Wi, li pè bagay sa. Se sa.</p> <p>Emerante: Yo te fè nou pè tou.</p> <p>Watson: Yo te fè nou pè. Non, mwen leve l yo fè m pè.</p> <p>Emerante: Yo fè w pè?</p> <p>Watson: Yo fè m pè, yo fè m pè.</p> <p>Emerante: Si w di moun sa yo pa sa kwè, gen anpil moun ki kwè denye moun ann Ayiti konn Vodou, non se pa vre. Tout moun pa konn Vodou. M pa konn koulyea si tout moun pa...</p> <p>Watson: Gen plis liberasyon, sou ide, bagay konsa.</p> <p>Emerante: Vrè.</p> <p>Watson: Mantalite a pi ouvè.</p> <p>Emerante: Se sa.</p> <p>Watson: Men lè w ap leve dan lezane 80 yo, yo fò w pè.</p> <p>Emerante: Yo fò w pè. Se sa.</p> <p>Watson: Vodou se dyab, lougawou...</p> <p>Emerante: M pa bezwen pale w de lezane '40!</p> <p>Watson: Wi, anvan, se sa.</p> <p>Emerante: Oke.</p> <p>Watson: E men kisa ki defini w ou menm kòm atis? Apre plizyè ane nan vi atis la, kisa... si w t ap defini tèt ou kòm yon atis, kijan w t ap defini tèt ou? Ar la se kisa l ye pou ou?</p> <p>Emerante: nanpwen moun ki kapab dekri "ar" vrè paske l'art est une chose qui est vraiment spontané. Une chose qui sort de vous, yon bagay ki soti nan ou, san ke w pa konn ki lè. Se kankou si m chita m ap pale avèk yon moun, m chita m ap pale ak ou, e</p>	<p>Watson: Yes, they were scared of it. That's true.</p> <p>Emerante: They made us scared of it.</p> <p>Watson: They made us scared. No, I grew up in it and I was scared of it.</p> <p>Emerante: They made you scared of it?</p> <p>Watson: They made me scared; they made me scared of it.</p> <p>Emerante: If you told those people... there are a lot of people that think all people in Haiti know Vodou, that's not true. Not everyone knows Vodou. I don't know if today everyone...</p> <p>Watson: There's more freedom of ideas, things like that.</p> <p>Emerante: True.</p> <p>Watson: A more open mentality.</p> <p>Emerante: That's it.</p> <p>Watson: But growing up in the 1980s, they made you scared of it...</p> <p>Emerante: They made you scared of it. It's true.</p> <p>Watson: ...That Vodou is evil, lougawou...</p> <p>Emerante: Then I don't have to tell you about the 1940s!</p> <p>Watson: Yes, before, that's true.</p> <p>Emerante: Okay.</p> <p>Watson: But what defines you as an artist? After many years living an artist's life, what... if you had to define yourself as an artist, how would you define yourself? What is art to you?</p> <p>Emerante: No one can truly describe what art is because art is something that is very spontaneous. Something that is comes out of you, without you knowing when. It's as if I'm sitting and talking with someone, I'm sitting and I'm talking to you</p>
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ou gen dwa vini ou menm ou di m yon bagay. Men si w di m yon bagay se ke imedyatman m ap jwenn yon repons pou m bay ou, sa k fè sa? Li fè pati de ar la. Se kòm si li nan ou. Kreyasyon an nan ou. Spontaneyite a nan ou. Gen yon bagay nan... yon dezyèm ou menm. Konprann? Ou gen yon bagay ki dikte w yon bagay, ki di w “men repons la” se pa ou menm ki chwazi l, se pa ou menm ki konnen l. Ou pa kapab, ou pa te kapab. Gen de bagay ke m di yon moun m pa kwè...

Watson: Gen de bagay ou reyalize nan vi atistik ou?

Emerante: Nan vi atistik mwen. M pa te kapab, si m la toujou sa s on bagay, m pa menm kapab esplike l. M kapab leve, pa egzanp m konn la, ou wè lakou, ou wè kay sa?

Watson: Mmm hmm.

Emerante: Ou wè bagay ki pase nan tranblemantè an? Ou wè l kanpe? Enben mande m kijan l kanpe? M pa konnen. M pa konnen kijan l fè kanpe. Yon ti estati devan pòt la, andedan pòt la, lè w fin antre premye mach eskalye a. Richa achte l nan men yon moun ki pote l vin vann. Richa, sa pa di Richa kòm moun nan konsa, non. Men Richa renmen Vodou. Tout sa l wè nan Vodou, li achte l. Lè m te rete nan Pèlen, gen yon bon distans isit la ak Pèlen. Enben jou Richa achte ti tonton sa ki anba, m dòmi, m reve yon moun di m “vin wè kote Richa mete m” M di “kisa Richa fè, Richa fè yon bagay.” Fò m al wè. M desann epi m wè ti tonton an jan l te vini vin di m nan, jan m te wè l la, jan m te konnen an. Enben se konsa gen yon sòt de enposib ki antre nan ou, ki di ou bagay la ki fè w koprann bagay la. Otreman ou pa ta sa konnen l, donk m kwè se sa ki devi atistik mwen, se li ki fè m, se li ki kenbe m, se yon doub...

Watson: De ou menm?

Emerante: Doub de ou menm. Ke ou pa konnen, ke ou pa...

Watson: Pa ka sezi? Pa meprize?

and you tell me something. Even if you tell me something that I don't immediately have a response to, I'll find an answer to give you. Why is that? It's part of the art. It's as if it's inside you. The creation is in you. The spontaneity is in you. There's something in... it's a second you. Understand? You have something that dictates you-that says “here's the response;” you're not the one who chooses it, you don't know it. You couldn't. There are things that I don't think people could...

Watson: There are things you realized in your artistic life?

Emerante: In my artistic life. I am not able to...that I'm still here is something; I can't even explain it. For example, you see that house?

Watson: Mmm hmm.

Emerante: You see that thing that was in the earthquake? You see it standing? Well ask me how it's standing? I don't know. I don't know how it's standing. A little statue in front of the door, inside of the door, after you pass the first step in the stairs. Richard bought it from someone who brought it here to sell. Richard, not to say Richard as the person like this, no. But Richard likes Vodou, he bought it. When I lived in Pèlen, there was a good distance between here and Pèlen. Well one day Richard bought this little statue that's down there, I was sleeping, I dreamt someone told me “come see where Richard put me” I said “what did Richard do. Richard did something.” I have to go see. I went down and I saw the little statue just as he was when he came to speak to me, just like I saw him, just like I had met him. Well that's how there's a kind of impossible that enters you, that tells you what makes you understand the impossible thing. Otherwise you wouldn't know it, so I think that's what describes my artistic life, that's what makes me, that's what holds me, it's a double...

Watson: Of yourself?

Emerante: A double of yourself. That you don't know; that you can't...

Watson: Can't surprise? Can't ignore?

Emerante: Ou pa ka sezi. Ou pa ka sezi. Se kankou lè m te genyen, m te gen yon powèm ke m te konn di m te renmen anpil. Se te *La nuit de l'essor de la fwet de mystè*, Enben m te renmen di l paske l toujou di tout kote l pase moun nan toujou ap swiv li. Doub la toujou ap swiv li, toujou wè l nan tout peyi nan tout kote. Men li pa t sa separe l de li. Epi nan fen, nan fen an, doub la soti li di l "M byen kontan ke w rele m zanmi oubyen w rele m yon frè men tout kote w ye m ap toujou la, m ap toujou konnen, jis lè w mouri, m ap chita sou tonm ou."

Watson: Wow.

Emerante: M te renmen l paske, plis ke m renmen rekèy powèm nan pou kò m.

Watson: Wi, dakò. Oke

Emerante: M renmen pou kò m nan se ke m gen yon bagay e m renmen pou kò m nan. M pa janm santi m pou kont mwen.

Watson: Oke, dakò.

Emerante: Donk, se sa, se konsa m defini ar la. E m konnen sans le savoir dènye moun ki atis konsa. E petèt menm yon istoryan te ansanm tou.

Watson: Wi, se sa.

Emerante: Yon istoryen, yon m pa konnen...

Watson: Antwopològ...

Emerante: Antwopològ, sa k fè w al fè antwopoloji, sa k fè w al fè, e se sa m etidye tou.

Watson: Antwopoloji?

Emerante: Antwopoloji, sa k fè ou fè l? Paske w renmen lanati... bagay ou renmen kilti a, ou renmen nati. Ou renmen lanati, ou viv ak lanati. Donk, se konsa ke m defini ar la mwen menm.

Emerante: You can't surprise. You can't surprise. It like when I had a poem that I used to say I really liked. It was *La nuit de l'essor de la fouette de mystère*, well I liked to recite it because it always said everywhere he passed the person was always following him, the double was always following him, always saw him in every country to which he went. But he couldn't separate himself from the double and in the end, the double came out of him and told him "I'm really happy that you called me your friend or you called me your brother, but everywhere you are, I'll always be there, I'll always know, until you die, and then I'll sit on your tomb."

Watson: Wow.

Emerante: I loved it, more than I love the collection of poems for myself.

Watson: Yes, understood. Okay.

Emerante: I liked being alone; I have something I like and I like to be alone. I never felt like I was lonesome.

Watson: Okay, understood.

Emerante: So, that's it, that's how I define that art. And I knew without knowing it that everyone who's an artist is like this. And perhaps even an historian is included too.

Watson: Yes, that's it.

Emerante: An historian, a...

Watson: Anthropologist...

Emerante: Anthropologist, what made you do anthropology, what made you do it, and that's what I studied too.

Watson: Anthropology?

Emerante: Anthropology, what made you do it? Because you like nature... you like culture, you like nature. You like nature, you live with nature. So, that's how I define art.

<p>Watson: Dakò. Ou fini?</p> <p>Emerante: Mmm hmm.</p> <p>Watson: Oke, you want something else, that's okay? No more?</p> <p>Emerante: That's okay?</p> <p>Watson: Oke, atis Emerante De Pradines. M pa konn si ke m ka retire plis istwa lavi w ankò. Ou di nou anpil sou vi atistik ou, ann Ayiti, aletranje, kòman ou viv, nou remèsye w anpil, nou panse ke avèk sa ou rakonte nou n ap konprann Ayiti mye, n ap konprann lavi atistik mye, n ap di w mèsì pou tout delegasyon FIU, mèsì anpil.</p> <p>Emerante: Mèsì, mwen menm tou, m remèsye nou plis ke nou vin mande m, nou enterese a vi, a vi atisik ann Ayiti, m kontan sa, m kontan pou nou genyen yon bon fòs ak kouraj pou nou viv, pou nou fè sa toujou pou tout moun kapab konnen, timoun k ap vini demen dèyè, tout jenès k ap vini an pou konnen l. Mèsì.</p> <p>Watson: Mèsì, mèsì. Nou remèsye w.</p>	<p>Watson: Understood. You're finished?</p> <p>Emerante: Mmm hmm.</p> <p>Watson: Okay, you want something else, that's okay? No more?</p> <p>Emerante: That's okay?</p> <p>Watson: Okay, artist Emerante De Pradines. I don't know if I can draw out any more stories about your life. You told us a lot about your life as an artist, in Haiti, abroad, how you lived, we really thank you. With what you've told us, we'll better understand Haiti; we'll better understand your life as an artist. On behalf of FIU, we thank you; thank you so much.</p> <p>Emerante: Thank you. Me too, I thank you more because you came to interview me, you're interested in the life, artistic life in Haiti. I'm happy for that, I'm happy for you to have strength and courage to live, so you can keep doing this so people can know, children who come later, all future generations can know. Thank you.</p> <p>Watson: Thank you, we thank you.</p>
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