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Colonialism as the Disaster: Retelling the Fight for Haitian Sovereignty

Sam Jean-Francois
Bates College, sjeanfra@bates.edu

Colonialism as the Disaster: Retelling the Fight for Haitian Sovereignty

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By Sam Jean-François

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“When you break something, you must study the pattern of the shattering before you can piece it back together.”

—— Akwaeke Emezi, Freshwater

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A special thank you first to my mother Clairma Jean-François for instilling in me a thirst for knowledge, love for my identity, and the strength needed to complete this capstone project; *manmi* as you are always telling me, I am indeed a "tough cookie". Another thank you to my sisters Guerline and Molly Jean-François, as well as, to my closest friends Emily Maria Diaz, Jenniflore Beaubrun, Elysia Garza, Marisela Flores Pineda, Abraham Mieses, Maxe Hinds, Ida Rahimi, Victoria Haghighi, and Frances White, for reminding me I am loved, capable of loving, and worth every avenue towards love. Without their encouragements, hugs, and "origami" sessions this thesis couldn't have been complete. Thank you to Dr. Sue Houchins of the Bates College Africana Program for advising me throughout this process. Professor Houchins has pushed me to think critically since my first day at Bates, thereby expanding my mind to horizons I never imagined. Though at times it was frustrating, I will always be grateful for how Professor Houchins has aided my growth as an academic and Black Feminist. And of course, lastly, thank you to my ancestors who paved the way forward. If it wasn't for them and Haiti's sacrifices, many of us wouldn't be free.

Abstract

Haitian history is marked by what Western scholars often refer to as disaster: moments of irreversible damage conceptualized as an immense loss of life, order, and collective agency. Broadcasted in hurricanes, earthquakes, and floods, Western scholarship has created an image of Haiti as an island in constant disarray, void of leadership, stability, and progress as a reflection of its community's short fallings. However, this characterization is untrue. Using the frameworks of disaster relief, intervention, and decolonization this thesis argues that colonialism is and has always been *the* disaster plaguing Haiti, hidden behind smaller events of chaos and justified as divine punishment for the "mistakes" of the Haitian people. The disasters present throughout Haitian history are not divine retribution, accidental, nor without cause: they a are single recurring byproduct of enduring colonial structures created in support of Western imperialism across the Caribbeans. In saying so I mark "disaster" as both a profitable byproduct of the colonial agenda and a specific requirement for its implementation. Analyzing pre-revolution Saint Domingue, the decline of Haitian sovereignty post-independence, Haiti's history of foreign occupation, and present calls for US intervention after the assassination of President Moïse on July 7 2021, this thesis centers it's analysis of disaster relief in decolonial theory. In doing so, this thesis offers the annihilation of all colonial structures as vital to the creation of true Haitian sovereignty and progress.

Prologue

Dear reader,

When I began writing this thesis, I was arrogant. As a first-generation Haitian American I assumed I knew all I would need to know about Haiti–-that my fluency in Kreyol, fragmented understanding of Haitian politics, and academic prowess would be enough to locate colonialism in the disasters plaguing Haiti. I was confident 10 months would be enough to redefine disaster in the Caribbeans, and that by the end of this thesis I would be an expert.

I couldn't have been more wrong.

As I write this capstone exercise near the end of my senior year, I have become aware of how incomplete this thesis is. It does not offer the solution to colonialism, nor, as I've realized after months of research and frustrations, can it. What I have been able to do though, is join Haitian scholars in the process of re-telling the history of Haiti through the lens of the colonial disaster.

Reflecting now there is so much I would change about this thesis. If given more time I would define disaster more precisely—specifying the points of collision and separation in the political and geographical effects of disaster in a given location; I would incorporate the works of more Haitian activists on scene who have a firmer grasp on Haiti's colonial disaster than I do as a Haitian displaced in America; I would dedicate more time to addressing the weight of disaster on not just the Black body, but on the Black mind and soul also; I would do a lot of things.

Yet regardless, I am still proud of the project I present to you. Although my work is ongoing, much like the disaster plaguing Haiti, if anything I hope you leave this thesis with a better understanding of how Haiti came to be, what Haiti represents to the world, and how disaster can be managed through community.

As a heuristic exercise, this thesis on colonialism as the disaster in Haiti has required much growth. I had to learn about parts of my identity that have been denied to me by Western academia, gain

comfortability in Kreyol –my mother tongue– and challenge myself to continue researching journey up to the last page of this project. As a child I knew very little about Haiti, even as I was raised in a predominantly Haitian community. All I knew of Haiti were the fears my parents shared, and few traditions they had kept with them on their journey to becoming American. But Haiti will always be a part of my lineage. It appears in the soup I've learned to make on January 1st, the short stories I write on race and identity, the poetry I perform, and most importantly my blood.

This thesis is not the end of my journey to learn more about Haiti, it is only the beginning. To Haiti, thank you for your love, your courage, and the strength you've given me. And to you reader, I thank you for allowing me to share my story with you.

With much love and kouraj,

Sam Jean-François

Introduction

My mother taught me to pray for happiness. I remember sitting next to her on Sundays. Our bodies were spaced apart by her Bible between us, the room humming with power as we prayed for what we believed would make us happy; money, family, prosperity... death. Although I no longer pray to God, this image of Christian divinity remains in my mind: a God capable of not just bringing joy but breaking bones, moving tides, and creating divinity from what was previously thought mundane. a God that bathes in the faith of his people.

Si'w wè map viv jodi a
se gras bondyé ki sou mwen, m'pa guin anyin m'fè konsa,
se gadé m'gadé m'weè li konsa!
If you see I'm living today
It's the grace of God on me, I don't have anything that makes me like this
I just looked, and looked, and saw I'm like this!

If you asked my mother what it means to believe in God, she would tell you a tale of cycles; God loves Lucifer until Lucifer wants to be God; God makes Man, and with Man Woman evades God; God creates paradise, and paradise is destroyed by people's sins. She would tell you a story of faith and failure, told repeatedly through the eyes of a God who wanted nothing more than to be irrevocably and steadfastly praised by creatures he, perhaps regrettably, gave free will. She would tell you about herself, and her journey to re-find faith after my birth.
My mother loves her God, even though history would question if he loves her too.

***

On January 12 2010, a magnitude 7 earthquake decimated Haiti, killing upwards of 200,000 thousand Haitians (Louis 1). At age nine this was my first encounter with disaster. I had heard it described as mayhem, and confusion, but nothing prepared me for the wreckage I'd later

see on TV. I don't remember much about the day it happened, where I was when I found out, or even how I reacted. But I do remember coming home to rapid streams of Kreyol coming from my mother's room, weaving through the house to my father's garage. The hard falling r's and k's reminding me I should've felt more connected to this event than I did.

Tout moun a fam?
Ke kote tranbleman de te sa sote?
Is everyone okay?
Where did this earthquake come from?

At the time of the earthquake, I knew very little about Haiti. Besides the fact that it was where most of my extended family lived, Haiti felt like a lot of fragments of my parents' past, something gestured at but never really talked about. The only times Haiti felt real before the earthquake was when my mother would press her phone against my ear and push me to speak with my uncles in broken strings of Kreyol, mirroring faint reflections of what a real conversation should be: "how are you uncle... I'm good... yes, God bless you too." In the days that followed I became fluent in grief and prayer, as I watched my parents hollow at the sight of their island's decay.

***

My mother is not a cold person. She is a Princess Diana Conspiracist, an avid Nollywood watcher, reigning Jean-François champion of Warri, favorite parent amongst my friends, cuddle buddy on the weekends, and a plethora of things that when stated do but affirm the fact that she is fiercely human. And yet, I begin with this because her reaction to the 2010 earthquake surprised me, and in many ways planted the seeds for this thesis. Where I expected her to be kind

and passionate, she was righteous and judgmental, telling me in the months and years to unfold: " si Ayisyen pat mechan Ayiti ta ka viv, if Haitians weren't wicked, Haiti could live."

To my mother and most evangelicals Haiti is not the victim of disaster, God is. Evangelical theorists such as George Armstrong in *The Christian Doctrine of Slavery* have described slavery in the Caribbeans as an "attempt to bring" people to God (Epps 243). Europeans tortured, kidnapped, and enslaved Haiti's West African ancestors as a divine intervention, meant to usher Africans into the new world under the guidance of good Christian fellowship (Epps 243). However, in the rejection of the Europeans' *gifts* through rebellion, dissent, and most importantly independence, Haitians scorned God, thereby becoming a new chapter in God's narcissistic journey to find praise. Haitians chose to create freedom on their own in the days before their revolution and fortified their connection with each other at Bois Kayman through their ancestors instead of their enslaver's God (Arthur and Dash 25). Although its revolution won its independence in 1804, Haiti is far from free today. Many Christians believe that in attempting to "short cut" our way to freedom through resistance and the return to African based religions, Haitians have doomed ourselves to a cycle of false freedom and disaster which is symbolized through the earthquakes, hurricanes, foreign intervention, and civil unrest that has plagued Haiti post-independence (Germain 257).

I disagree with my mother, and most Evangelicals. The cause of Haiti's problems are not divine, they are political. Years of colonial persecution, oppression, and international interventions have encouraged the world to forget that colonialism is the disaster plaguing Haiti, perpetuated through its offspring's neo-colonialism, and supporting structure anti-Blackness. It's not Haitians who have scorned God, or God who has scorned us, but colonialism that has

scorned the colonized– placing Haitian sovereignty in constant in jeopardy since its independence In this thesis I will argue that colonialism has, and continues to be, the disaster plaguing Haiti, disguised through colonial technologies such as religion and foreign aid as the solution to Haiti's sufferance rather than the perpetrator of it. I say this because to contextualize the rhetoric of poverty and suffering which emanate from Western (Euro-American nations such as America, Canada, and France) accounts of Haiti is to understand them as racial technologies, a part of past settlers' desperate desires to regain sovereignty over Haiti; thus, regaining full ownership of the island's resources. In doing so, I hope to mark "disasters" as the portal for renditions of colonialism, inviting colonists to control the current state of Haiti, and continue taking advantage of imperialist structures remaining from Haiti's colonial history.

This thesis is organized in four chapters. "Chapter 1: What is Disaster", provides the theoretical framework for this project. Defining colonialism as a self-replicating disaster, supported by the creation of smaller disasters, this chapter explains how colonialism impacts Haiti's ability to sustain itself. "Chapter 2: Who Are the Haitians", outlines Haitian history. As this section moves from Haiti's colonial past under France as Saint Domingue, to the events leading up its independence, chapter two describes the colonial legacies slavery created. "Chapter 3: Haiti's Duppy, The Disaster is Here and Here to Stay", describes the violence enacted under the U. S's 1915 occupation. Then finally, Chapter 4: The Quake, The Lies, and Now, examines how colonialism exacerbated the consequences of Haiti's already deadly earthquake and how the quake led to Haiti's current era of NGO's, UN occupation, and continued struggles for sovereignty.

Chapter 1: What is Disaster?

There is a tendency to only think of disasters by how they manifest in the natural world. People usually hear the word disaster and think of an earthquake, flood, fire, tornado, or other violent natural phenomena—all of which, I might add, are quite good representations of disaster. But land occupation is also a disaster. Capitalism is also a disaster. The violent expression of unequalness created by Christian evangelicalism is a disaster. Slavery, anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, hetero-sexism, xenophobia, ableism, ageism, and classism are all disasters. Like the natural disasters I've listed above, colonialism and its impacts have *also* resulted in irreparable death, erasure, environmental pollution, famine, disease, and power imbalances across the world. I firmly say so because if disaster is elucidated by the sudden loss of life, community, and order in any given population, then by default, all things connected with colonialism and its technologies are disasters.

This chapter argues that disasters are not always as *natural* as they seem. Even the most inconceivable catastrophes are aided by human ventures. Outlining colonialism as the ongoing root of Haiti's and much of the global south's instability, this section expands telluric definitions of disaster to also include political, social, and economic manifestations of chaos resulting from human actions, especially through colonialism. Here colonialism has been defined as a structure of domination, employed to support the economic growth and development of those enacting it, as well as the space they call their home: the metropole. Colonialism is *the* disaster plaguing Haiti, and in saying so I will mark disaster as both a byproduct of the colonial agenda and a specific requirement for its survival.

This chapter also attempts to make sense of what I describe as the colonial contradiction. The existence of all forms of colonialism has catastrophic impacts on the land, cultures, and

peoples they encounter, and yet, it's also in this catastrophe that colonialism further cements itself as the solution to the disasters its actions create. It's created a cycle in which it's the West that decimates the world with imperial deeds, and yet the West we (members of the global south) turn to for relief for its harm. This chapter navigates the challenges that arise from this contradiction, and why the colonial disaster can only lead to more disasters.

Perpetual Problems: Disaster & Colonialism Defined

Blake Hudson describes disaster as *cycles of damages*, documented through seemingly singular, yet sequential occurrences (Hudson 10). As "unresolved issues which continue to plague the humanitarian community," disasters intersect with pre-existing problems within a community, and create new catastrophes (McEntire 355). Imagine the dominoes with which my sisters and I used to play. On rainy days, one of us would crouch down near the far corner of our living room wall and stand a domino on its edge on the floor. Taking turns, we'd create a trail of dominoes across the room, and watch as over time they weaved out from each in tight spirals. Once done we'd flick the dominoes over and let gravity run its course, running from the room before our parents could hear the clashing of plastic against linoleum tile. Disaster, like the dominoes topping game we played, appears to be separate events closely related to each other in a continuum of chaos. Another term for this is the domino effect.

Colonialism exists on a similar continuum of chaos as disaster. Colonialism is a structure of domination, employed to support the economic growth and development of those enacting it, as well as the space they call their home: the metropole. "Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such a nation an empire" (Rivera 127). Although western scholars have asserted colonialism is beneficial to global industrialization, and modern leadership, it has

disastrous impacts on the land, body, and legacies of those colonized. Colonialism begins with invaders claiming sovereignty over resource rich regions they've discovered. At first the invaders come offering peace, gifts even, for those indigenous to the land. However, this is only a distraction, their real purpose is land acquisition and the assumption of said land's resources. Then in a forced relationship between an indigenous (or enslaved) majority and a minority of foreign invaders, fundamental decisions impacting the lives of the indigenous minority are implemented by the foreigners in pursuit of resources (Tuck and Yang 3).

Although colonialism is often mistaken for its supporting structure, capitalism, the two are distinct from one another. Capitalism is the economic philosophy that underpins colonial projects. Its colonial purpose is to create profit from capital produced by the metropole's colonies to expand wealth garnered by said colonial projects. While colonialism is about land and labor acquisition, capitalism refers to the use of said land to produce profit. Once colonists have claimed sovereignty over foreign territory, the resources connected to this land become markers of power. One becomes rich by owning land, and even richer through the exploitation of this land to produce marketable goods. In *Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon connects the rise of capitalism with the expansion of colonialism. Fanon argues as colonialism expands the reach of the metropole, capitalism as its supporting agent "regard[s] the colonies as a source of raw materials, which once processed could be unloaded on the European market" (Fanon 26). Once made profit is spent on instruments needed to colonize additional land such as: armies, enslaved laborers, and weapons. Land and labor are always the true goal of colonialism, and capitalism streamlines this process.

There are 5 key technologies of colonialism:

- *The military*: "The muscle of colonial/imperial expansion" (Shepard 35).

Through force, and violent oppression the military squashes potential threats to settler sovereignty at a national and international level. Military access is needed to acquire land and retain sovereignty over this land. Without a form of organized state violence, the existence of the military is justified through forms of patriotism expressed by the settlers in charge: this land is ours, and it is our duty to protect it (Shepard 35).

- *Capitalism*: The economic system supporting the monetary requirements of colonization. Through capitalism, other sectors of colonialism claim marketability, providing race, gender, religion, war, and sexuality with value tied to contributions to the colonial endeavor. Under capitalism racialized exploitation and capital accumulation are mutually reinforcing.

In *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender Kinship and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic,* Jennifer L. Morgan quotes Hortense Spillers' description of race and capitalism: "the captive body becomes the site of a metaphor for value… render[ing] useless any distinction between the literal and figurative violence the enslaved person were subjected to (Morgan 6).

- *Race/ Racism:* As stated by Dorothy Roberts in *Fatal Invention*, race has historically been (and continues to) disguised as a biological category to justify racial injustice. As a mode of coloniality, racial hierarchies are form of governance, separating colonists (white Euro-Americans) from groups they've enslaved, tortured, and maimed in the name of free labor. White supremacy is another term for colonial supremacy, whiteness appearing as a physical marker of colonizer identity. Through race, whiteness as an identity becomes synonymous

with access to power; and Blackness in the case of Africa and its diaspora as the labor fueling it, becomes synonymous with the absence of power.

- *Religion:* Religion is the unseen hand of colonialism, operating as the ideology used to naturalize the reality held by its wielders. In most forms of Euro-American colonialism, Christianity is the primary religion used not only to justify acts of violence inflicted on Black bodies—slavery, mass incarceration, eugenics, castration, etc—but also solidify the power of colonialist through images of divinely ordained white sovereignty. Christianity preaches colonialism as a humanitarian project, meant to bring civility. Therefore, Christianity is a powerful policing structure.
- *Heteropatriarchy/ Hetero Paternalism*: The structures of heteropatriarchy and hetero paternalism work together to police gender, sexuality, and normative family structures. Colonialism is an inherited practice, championed by men. The heteropatriarchy creates social structures meant to affirm heterosexuality and male dominance as the norm by which power is held. As disruptors of hetero paternalism, queerness is discouraged through state sanctioned suppression (Arvin 13). Like the heteropatriarchy, hetero paternalism presumes that for society to function the father is both central to "the arrangement of the state and its institutions" (Arvin 13). Both refer to expressions of gender and sexuality stuck in the binary of maleness/femaleness—falsely positioning the male gender as "strong, capable, wise, and composed", and the female gender as "weak, incompetent, naive, and confused" (Arvin 13).

For colonialism to function to its fullest capacity its technologies must be in conversation with

each other. While there are other technologies helpful to the colonial project, these are the few that appear with the most frequency.

Some scholars have already connected colonialism and its technologies with disaster terminology. For example, Naomi Klein has rooted disaster in capitalism, through a relationship she describes as "[the] instrumentality of catastrophe for advancing the political, ideological, and economic interests of transnational capitalist elite groups" (Klein n.p). Danielle Rivera has described disaster as a particular kind of colonialism, separate from settler colonialism, neo-colonialism, or traditional colonialism in its leveraging of disaster for the purposes of deepening colonization. Africana Scholar Cassandra Shepard has traced disaster in settler colonialism, which she's defined as the ongoing colonial relationship of exploitation and extraction born from the re-indigenizing of colonized lands by colonialists who have chosen to make stolen lands their homes and become settlers (28). In her analysis Shepard describes settler colonialism as an unresolved issue, which grips on time, agency, land, and sovereignty has given settlers the perfect position for placing solution to its problems in the folds of its resources (28).

While I'm in agreement with Klein, Rivera, and Shepard's analyses, there is a weakness to their arguments created by the specificity of their placements of disaster. Yes, disaster is profitable; yes, disaster works with colonialism, yes, settler colonialism is a disaster; but disaster isn't solely in colonialism's use of capitalism or reserved to distinct forms of colonialism such as the disaster colonialism, and settler colonialism described by Rivera and Shepard, it's in all aspects of colonialism, making colonialism itself a disaster. Largely, because each aspect of any form of colonialism has catastrophic impacts on the ecosystems of the communities, they take part in.

For example, Haiti's 2010 earthquake *wa*s natural in its origins, but became *disastrous* in

its impacts by the West's (Euro-American nations such as America, Canada, and France) frequent attacks on Haiti's infrastructure over the last 200 years. Many of the deaths that came after the quake were from debris and rubble torn from unstable buildings that weren't up to code (Katz 27). And the instability of these buildings was a direct byproduct of the West siphoning off resources that could have gone to infrastructure, and proper city maintenance. Generations of indemnities, foreign occupations, and economic manipulation by the West has direct funds that should be going to the Haitian people to foreign powers.

Therefore, this thesis uses a broader approach to associating disaster and colonialism. Disasters are an expansive space, which are ongoing; they constantly re-emerge to impact the communities they plague. Colonialism as a structure must be understood with the same elasticity, as it constantly creates new technologies and versions of its processes to ensure full control. While it is helpful to look at the nuances of each technology, and each version because of the varying impacts each have, at their core all achieve the colonial goal of land acquisition and resource retention. Rather than define colonialism as a specific disaster, I want it to be as broad and fluid as possible. This is especially vital in the analysis of Haiti since its population has experienced numerous forms of colonial exploitation, be it through settlement, occupation, proxy wars, remote influence (neocolonialism), over five centuries.

All colonialisms are disasters, as their enactments require closely related events, or technologies. In labeling colonialism as the perpetual disaster plaguing the globe, disaster is a key component of each aspect of colonialism. As a fluid structure, colonialism "obfuscates the true disaster of conquest by scapegoating unbridled nature as the source of the problem" (Shepard 25). Or in other words, to veil its presence as a disaster, colonialism must rely on seemingly natural transitory disasters to hide its impacts. And as an ongoing disaster, colonialism

is exceedingly difficult to recognize, despite its role in most global crises and mass destruction. In this sense, colonizers (those of European descent, racialized as the white, wielding power in colonial societies), are an invasive species that must be stopped, as their presence subjects all colonial citizens to violence and possible extinction. For colonists, disaster is a fortuitous agent of the colonial agenda, and for the world experiencing the impacts of their actions, colonialism is a disaster in of itself composed of adjacent smaller disasters. Haiti in its journey towards sovereignty provides a clear case study of how colonialism is a disaster which comprises smaller seemingly separated disasters.

What does the colonial disaster look like?

Fig.1. This still was taken from a video posted on popular Haitian-led instagram page @facesofHaiti, taken by a bystander to the scene. The state of the woman and her child is currently unknown; @Facesofhaiti "the Violent Mass Deportation of Haitians Continues to Raise Concerns of a Blatant Violation of Human Rights" Instagram, https://www.instagram.com/reel/ClBlgbOqvyK/?igshid=MDJmNzVkMjY.

Today is November 18 2022, and as I write this I just watched a woman give birth outside of Government Hospital in Jimani, Dominican Republic. She gave birth in an alley, seconds after being dragged by hospital guards from the waiting room she was denied help. The women around her fanned her in concern: "mete'l tèt anba", put the [baby] head first; "doktè a gen move kè", the doctor has a wicked heart (@FacesofHaiti n.p). Over and over, I've watched this

video trying to decipher what action could warrant such hatred? How an institution supposedly meant to provide access to those in need could turn a woman at the brink of giving birth away? Her crime? Being Haitian in a country that views Haitian life, or any reminder of Blackness, as a detriment to its stability.

On July 7, 2021, the "illegitimate president of Haiti", Jovenel Moïse was assassinated in his bedroom in Port-au-Prince (Valle 1). In the wake of his death, gas prices in Haiti have skyrocketed, food insecurity has grown exponentially, and the oil blockade enacted by G9 gang leader Jimmy "Barbecue" Cherizier has closed schools businesses and hospitals across Haiti (Danticat, "The Fight for Haiti's Future" n.p). And to make matters worse, more than 50,000 asylum seeking Haitians have been deported from Haiti's neighboring country, the Dominican Republic ("Dominican Republic Steps Up Haitian Deportations, Raising Tensions"). The President of the Dominican Republic (DR), Luis Abinader, has even gone so far as to state its "dangerous for the integrity of the Dominican Republic to receive asylum seekers in the country" (Janetsky n.p). Despite calls from U.N High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turks to "halt deportations of Haitians" facing "systemic human rights violations in their home country", the DR continues to forcibly remove Haitians ("Dominican Republic Steps Up Haitian Deportations, Raising Tensions" n.p).

Haiti is in a state of disaster far too familiar to its people. Haitians are recoiling from the impacts of COVID-19, the U. N's cholera catastrophe in 2017, Hurricane Matthew in 2016, and of course the 2010 earthquake. While the world should be holding the U.S responsible for its involvement in Haiti's current instability, their eyes have instead been guided by Western scholars back Haiti's people. For example, earlier this year The Washington Post put up a series of stories about Haiti. In one of the "The Descent into Chaos has Further to Go", the Washington

described Haiti as nation divided by “mounting pandemonium and gang warfare” after Moïse’s assassination. The article continued to describe the civil unrest in Haiti but didn’t provide context for Haiti’s political instability: US interventions. Instead, the article called on the US and other key governments to “face Haiti’s collapse squarely” and prevent further chaos in Haiti by intervening (“The Descent into Chaos has Further to Go” n.p) .Haiti continues to be deemed incapable of creating peace on its own accord. Even Haitian officials like as Prime Minister Ariel Henry still hold onto the belief that the West holds the answers to Haiti’s problems, as earlier this year he supported calls US intervention (Danticat, “The Fight for Haiti's Future” n.p).

Much of the media's coverage of Haiti’s chaos fails to represent its disasters as coloniality in action—hiding behind earthquakes, diseases, and political unrest rather than dealing with the invasive nature of Western “humanitarian aid.” Or, the more accurate label, neocolonialism— the use of economic or political pressure to claim remote sovereignty over a nation (Vysotskaia 17). The chaos manifesting in Haiti now has been years in the making, holding threads from U.S backed coup-d'etat in 1991, the US rice bill that decimated Haiti’s farming economy in 1985, and even the hurricane of first leading to US intervention in Haiti’s disaster prevention programming (Mullin; Joseph).[1]

[1] The 1985 Farm Bill significantly boosted subsidies for American rice, selling American rice cheaper than Haitian rice (“How the United States Crippled Haiti’s Rice Industry” n.p). Haitian rice farmers lost their role in Haiti’s economy as cheaper American imported “Miami Rice” flooded the nation (“Haiti’s Rice Industry). For further discussion of the U. S’s decimation of Haiti’s rice economy see “How the United States Crippled Haiti’s Rice Industry”

Fig.2. Haitian police fire tear gas during a protest demanding the resignation of Haiti's Prime Minister Ariel Henry; "Photos: Haitian Protesters Demand PM's Resignation." Protests News | Al Jazeera, Al Jazeera, 18 Oct. 2022, https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2022/10/18/photos-haitian-protesters-demand-pms-resignation.

The political unrest Haiti currently faces was sparked long before President Moïse's assassination or even his presidency. The conditions allowing for his widely opposed presidency resulted from planned international interventions, and occupation. Nearly two decades before Moïse's inauguration, Haiti was preparing to enter a new era of leadership. The reign of dictator and gang leader Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier had ended, his son "Baby Doc" had fled Haiti, and the nation had hopes of hosting its first democratic presidential election (Pierre 1). From this rose liberation theologian and excommunicated Catholic priest candidate, Jean-Bertrand Aristide (Joseph 185). Aristide was championed as a leader of the people, swearing to liberate the peasant class, fight against US sponsored Haitian elitism, and in a progressive manifesto titled *100 Vese Dechoukaj, Va T'en Satan!* reminded the peasant class that violence was the tool used by our ancestors to liberate Haiti and may offer the answer to the class divide ruling Haiti (Joseph 185).

Echoing the sentiments of Fanon in *Wretched of the Earth, 100 Vese Dechoukaj, Va T'en Satan!* radicalized the Haitian people. Verses from his work included sentiments such as: "Lanmo pou mechan" death to the wicked, "adye defen kochon" farewell to the deceased pigs, and

“si n’te dechoucke yo, yo pa t’ao gen tan dechouke ou!” if we had uprooted them, they will not have the time to uproot you. (Joseph 202). In his early years Aristide reflected Haiti’s anti-colonial sentiments. In stances such as death to the wicked, or uproot the rich, Aristide embodied Haiti’s journey towards national liberation. As a result, Aristide is an important figure in Haitian politics. While Aristide’s words have often been taken out of context, the ideas expressed in *100 Vese Dechoukaj, Va T'en Satan!* and later works such as *In the Parish of the Poor: Writings from the Poor in Haiti* provided a voice to the long-silenced peasant Haitian class, earning Aristide the title of “defender of the poor” (Joseph 191).

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF DEMOCRACY IN HAITI

"Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, President of the Republic of Haiti

Address to the Forty-Sixth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, New York City, September 25, 1991

The First Commandment of Democracy: Liberty or Death...

The Second Commandment of Democracy: Democracy or Death...

The Third Commandment of Democracy: Fidelity to Human Rights...

The Fourth Commandment of Democracy: The Right to Eat and to Work...

The Fifth Commandment of Democracy: The Right to Demand What Rightfully Belongs to Us...

The Sixth Commandment of Democracy: Self-Defiance of the Diaspora...

The Seventh Commandment of Democracy: No to Violence, Yes to "Lavalas" ...

The Eighth Commandment of Democracy: Faithfulness to the Human Being–the Ultimate Form of Wealth...

The Ninth Commandment of Democracy: Faithfulness to Our Culture...

The Tenth Commandment of Democracy: All Around the Table...

We are faced with an historic encounter as we approach 1992. It is an historic encounter on the eve of the 500th anniversary of the evangelization and of the struggle of the Haitian people to survive and retain its dignity and identity. As we approach this 500th anniversary of resistance, both qualitative and quantitative, we can speak of a meeting around the table. This is in truth a real challenge facing us at the threshold of the third millennium" ("Ten Commandments of Democracy in Haiti, September 25, 1991" n.p).

Fig.3. Jean-Bertrand Aristide at his inauguration in Port-au-Prince on February 7th, 1991. Aristide was the first Haitian President to deliver his inaugural address in Kreyol, the language spoken by the majority of Haiti's citizens; "AP Images - on This Day in 1991, Jean-Bertrand Aristide..." Facebook, https://m.facebook.com/APImages/photos/10158864640033865/.

Under Aristide's rule Haiti, seemed to be heading towards a period of reformation. However, Aristide's first presidency was short-lived. Seven months after his inauguration on February 7 1991, Aristide was removed from power by a military coup supported by the Haitian bourgeoisie, as well as the United States, Canada, and France. Although Aristide was reinstated in 1994 by the same international community that aided in his removal, the damage was done. When Aristide returned for his second term in 2001, he was a changed man. Aristide's second presidency was marked by Chimeres gang corruption, political suppression, and a deep distrust of Western influence, resulting in another US-backed coup in 2004 The impacts of imperial intervention during Aristide's terms soured what could have been a renaissance for Haiti's peasant class into a decade of political unrest and deep paranoia (Joseph 191, 193).

After Aristide's second fall Haiti was under the occupation of the United States, Canada, and France, using "the United Nations as a cover to make it acceptable and palatable to the rest of the world" (Valle 3). Originally calling for "the immediate deployment of the Multinational Interim Force for a period of three months to help to secure and stabilize the capi-tal, Port-au-

Prince", the UN's presence in Haiti eventually evolved into a series of pursuits for power (Pierre 7). By 2010, the UN had successfully extended the grounds for their occupation through MINUSTAH (The United Nations Stabilization Mission)– a stabilization force primarily led by the US, Canada, France, and Brazil– and iced Haitians out of the democratic process through a round of rigged election voting pro-US candidate Michael Martelly as president (Pierre 13).

The UN's thirteen-year reign over Haiti has not only devalued Blackness in Haiti but has also caused: food price inflations, the rise of NGO monopolies, increased government corruption and gang violence, a cholera outbreak that's claimed the lives of close to 10,000 Haitians, and the frequent sexual abuse and exploitation of Haitian women and children in each location MINUSTAH personnel were stationed (Valle 17; Freedman 1; Pierre 12). Rather than stabilize Haiti, international intervention has placed millions of Haitians in positions of food insecurity, sexual exploitation, abuse, and democratic erasure, making many of these nations even richer in the process.

Fig 4. Becheline Appoliner, the mother of Dominic Antonio Cortez, whose father was a UN peacekeeper from Argentina before abandoning Appoliner and Cortez; Karla, Zabludovsky. "UN Peacekeepers Fathered Dozens Of Children In Haiti. The Women They Exploited Are Trying To Get Child Support." *Buzzfeed News*, 30 Aug. 2021, https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/karlazabludovsky/haiti-earthquake-un-peacekeepers-sexual-abuse.

In 2017 the UN announced their MUNSTAH program was ending (Pierre 16). While for many Haitians this seemed like the beginning of a new era, the US continued influence to interfere with Haitian politics. Months before the UN's decision to splinter their efforts, Jouvnel Moïse was elected president of Haiti. However, Moïse was voted in an election representing only eighteen percent of *eligible* voters in Haiti (Danticat, "Demonstrators in Haiti"). Meaning, in a country of "ten million people, [only] about 600,000" citizens voted Moïse into power – not accounting for the rural communities soon to be most impacted by his exploitative rule (Danticat, "Demonstrators in Haiti").

Although Moïse was celebrated for his farmer focused agricultural policies, Haitian activist speculated that Moïse was a part of the PetroCaribe Oil scandal and accused him of embezzling funds meant to support construction in Haiti to further his own riches (Robles n.p).[2] Moïse was involved in the violent murders of protests across most notoriously the La Saline Massacre on November 13 2018, that killed "seventy-three men, women, and children" in Port-au-Prince's most impoverished lakou (Danticat, "Demonstrators in Haiti"). Months before his death Haitians gathered across Port-au-Prince to demand his removal. Moise extended his presidential term beyond his allotted years which breached Haiti's constitution. His disregard to the nation's laws provided Haitians with the legal justification required for their calls for Moïse's impeachment. American President Joseph Biden would be one of many international leaders to rush to Moïse's support, despite opposition from the Superior Council of Haiti's Judiciary, the Haitian Bar Federation, and the Haitian Diaspora Organization (Danticat, "Haitians Are at an

[2] The PetroCaribe was set up in 2005 by Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez and allowed Caribbean nations to buy Venezuelan oil and defer payment for 40% of what they bought for up to 25 years. Governments were then meant to use money that would have been spent on oil to develop their economies and fund social programs. Moïse's administration was accused of mismanaging up to two billion dollars of PetroCaribe cash in the investment of government funds in his road-building business. Haiti still owes Venezuela millions of dollars for borrowed oil (Nugent n.p).

Impasse over the Country's Future" n.p).

Fig 5. This photo was taken by Monique Clesca on November 18th, 2018, five days after the La Saline Massacre as protestors in Port-au-Prince called out the Moïse administration for their silence. Here a Hougan, vodun priest, created a vèvè to call for Ougou, the lwa of war. "Flames shot up and the women and men sang and circled around the ceremonial fire. Watching them comforted me as much as watching the houngan stoically rearranging each bit of falling wood, and I understood that Vaudou --its songs, dances, and benevolent principles--is one of the major foundations of Haitian life"; Monique, Clesca. "Dispatch from Haiti: A Fire this Time." Black Renaissance, vol. 48, no. 5, 2019, pp. 6.

President Moïse was assassinated on July 21, 2021, inside his home in Perelin 5, a suburb in Haiti. Moise died on the scene, suffering from a direct gunshot to the head and torso, a broken arm and ankle, as well as a gouged eye ("Haiti President's Assassination: What We Know So Far" n.p). His wife, Martine Moïse, was also in critical condition before being flown to Miami for treatment (Lemare 1). His adult daughter, Jomalie Moïse, was unarmed ("Haiti President's Assassination"). Investigators of the scene have charged forty people in connection to Moïse's assassination, chief among them a team of twenty Colombian mercenaries, accompanied by two Haitian Americans hired for translation ("Haiti President's Assassination"). Regardless, many members of my family felt an immense loss when Moïse died.

Using my framework of colonial actions as the perpetual disaster Haiti faces, Moïse's assassination calls to question the reality of the sovereignty held by the Haitian people and

additionally the true nature of foreign structures meant to provide stability to Haiti. How did a team of assassins enter the president's home? Where were his guards at the time of the attack? How could the Colombian trained natives have not only infiltrated Moïse's circle but been in Haiti for three months unnoticed? What happened to the murdered clerk investigating Moïse's assassination? Where does the US fit into all of this? In grappling with these questions, five facts about Moïse's assassination have become clear:

1. Moïse, like most of the criminal activities plaguing Haiti, was backed by settler-states such as America.
2. Moïse, drafted a new constitution before his death, that would eliminate the prohibition against consecutive presidential terms & dissolved Haiti's parliament in 2020–actions that would inevitably strengthen his already authoritarian rule over Haiti (Danticat, "Haitians Are at Impasse")
3. The Colombian mercenaries officials have claimed materialized from nowhere, were in Haiti for months before the assassination. According to multiple reports, they were also working with the Haitian police, with "full knowledge of the Haitian government, Colombia, and the United States (Valle 14).
4. Moïse's death has led to calls for another U.S occupation, more direct than their indirect occupation of Haiti from 2004-2017 gained through their grip over the U.N. And current prime minister Ariel Henry, one of the Haitian officials pleading for U.S occupation, just so happens to have equal support from the U.S in his reign over Haiti (Danticat, "Haitians Are at Impasse").
5. Moïse's death has placed Haiti in another state of disaster, profitable to all but the Haitians suffering from it.

Through formal control over Haiti, occupation will give the US unchecked authority over Haiti. The US will not only become privy to Haitian labor but do so under the guise humanitarian aid will provide them. The political instability Haiti is most recently experiencing came from a series of planned attacks by the international community. And like most aid offered to Haiti; it will come at the cost of Haitian sovereignty.

Haiti has more NGO's (non-governmental organizations) than any other country in the world and yet it remains the "most impoverished" nation in the Western Hemisphere (Valle 7). Haiti has had countless interventions, and yet still it struggles to become stable. The political unrest heightened by Moïse's assassination is representative of the unstated reality of the New World: as they (imperial states) grow richer, we must grow poorer. Haiti's current disaster blamed on political unrest is nearly identical to the disaster faced after the 2010 earthquake, Aristide's 2004 coup, and Duvalier's decade long dictatorship in that Haitians are being erased from our own governing institutions. The disaster is not in what is happening, but in Haiti's inability to combat what is happening because of international intervention. Haiti is not the most impoverished nation in the Western Hemisphere. Haiti is one the most *exploited* nation in the Western Hemisphere, and until the battle for sovereignty Haitians face is called what is, Haiti will never truly recover from the colonial disaster.

A Traditional Song for Ezili

"Manman mwen, manman mwen kote ou ye

Nou tande nan dlo

Kote ou ye, manman mwen

Pwoche lakaya la

My mother, my mother where are you

We are waiting in the water

Where are you, my mother

Come to the house" (Tinsely 417).

Chapter 2: Slavery & Disasters Origins

Saint Domingue was the most lucrative slave colony in the world. As a small part of the island of Hispaniola, Saint Domingue powered France's colonial endeavors, producing sugar, coffee, indigo and cotton in mass (Geggus 126). Although Saint Domingue is a tragic part of Haiti's history, it is how disaster first manifested on the island. The commodification of Black bodies has always been in the service of colonial wealth and imperial supremacy. "Whether alive or dead" Blackness is colonialism's most insidious form of currency (Hunt 318). Africans forced into chattel slavery not only lost their rights to bodily autonomy and agency, but as described in *Feeding the Machine*, became expendable cogs in colonialism's capitalist structure (Hunt 328). As a mechanism of the colonial disaster, slavery in Saint Domingue attempted to alienate its captive population from their humanity. In 1791 enslaved Africans across Saint Domingue began the world's first successful slave revolution, thereby giving birth to the nation of Haiti. Though Haiti's independence was a step towards liberation, slavery—and therefore colonialism—remains a specter in Haiti's psyche.

This chapter analyses the violence used to enforce slavery under colonialism to recontextualize the concept of disaster in Haiti. Though this project centers on the rise of colonialism as Haiti's enduring disaster, this chapter does not provide a full history of Haiti. Instead, this text traces the influence of slavery as a thread in the tapestry of recurring disasters in Haiti: by describing the Atlantic Slave Trade, outlining life under enslavement, describing the beginning of rebellion, and then enumerating the cost of Haiti's independence. In questioning how disaster and resistance have played a foundational role in the creation of Haiti's national identity, this chapter also addresses how a deep sense of community originated as one of Haiti's strongest weapons against disaster.

> “Am I Not A Man and a Brother? ... Am I Not a Woman and A Sister?” (Williams 107).
> — Josiah Wedgwood

The Atlantic Slave Trade

The Atlantic Slave Trade operated from the early sixteenth century to the late nineteenth century. The Atlantic Slave Trade claimed the lives of more than 2.2 million Africans at sea, before auctioning those remaining along the Americas (Mannix and Cowley). Europeans took the first enslaved Africans in Saint Domingue from the countries of the Gulf of Guinea including Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria as well as Congo and Angola for slave trafficking. Contrary to popular belief, Africans first entered the Caribbeans free from bondage (James 8). Africans were also exploring the new world for resources, and their experiences were vital to the later explorations of colonists like Christopher Columbus (James 8). The dominant representation of Africans in the New World as solely under a source of labor is a form of anti-Blackness generationally used to dehumanize them and devalue their contributions to the body of knowledge that benefited world exploration. Stories of African cartographers, explorers, and experts counteract colonialism's perception of Black people as objects; instead, they illustrate Africans as capable of thought, ingenuity, and agency— all hallmarks of humanity championed by European imperialists (Lindsay 349).

France joined the Atlantic Slave Trade in 1669 but did not acquire its territorial rights to Saint Domingue until 1695 (Geggus 119). Hispaniola was initially a Spanish colony, with unofficial French and English settlements scattered across the island. Through the Treaty of Ryswick in 1695, Spain gave France official property rights over the western part of Hispaniola (Charles and Dash 18). This divided the island into two colonies: French Saint Domingue and

Spanish Santo Domingo. France sponsored more than 4,033 slaving voyages during this period and sent 80 percent of their captives to populate Saint Domingue's labor force (Geggus 126).

Fig. 6. A map of Saint Domingue under French colonialism; Anonymous French. The French Portion of the Island of Haiti (Isle de Saint Domingue). print, 2nd half 18th Century. Musée du quai Branly, JSTOR, https://jstor.org/stable/community.15674527. Accessed 14 Dec. 2022.

The value of Blackness and Black bodies fluctuated throughout the Atlantic Slave Trade depending on the economic needs of a colony's metropole. Consequently, enslaved Africans were either of extreme value to Europeans or expendable. In lower peaks, some captains massacred Africans to claim cargo insurance or gain the most profit. (James 9). Part of the slave trade's precarious nature is rooted in colonialism's philosophy of racial capitalism. Racial capitalism describes the intersection between racial and capital accumulation created by colonialism's use of human labor to sustain itself (Melamed 77). Under racial capitalism Black people are economically valuable for the labor they provide, but distinct in their social positioning beneath their white counterparts. Slavery facilitates the distinction between Black laborers and white colonists in its creation of an economic structure that reduces Black bodies to

white property (Melamed 77). To do so Blackness and consequently Black people, must be made incapable of social mobility and subhuman. This process of devaluation as humans began with their treatment as cargo in the Middle Passage. Once designated as cargo, Africans brought to Saint Domingue faced social death, a state of existence in which the slave only lives in the shadow of their master. (Brodber 12). Thus, with their loss of autonomy, Africans died the moment they were captured, even as their bodies were put to work after (Brodber 12).

The voyages were themselves a disaster. In his firsthand account Frenchman, Pierre De Vaissiere describes the torture Africans faced during the middle passage as "atrocities",

> captains smashed with iron bars arms and legs to the most stubborn who are thus left exposed in the eyes of their companions. We can judge by those that, on the mere suspicion of a revolt, a slave captain… [condemned] two of them to death. The first [was] slaughtered in front of the others; the captain has his heart ripped out, the fie and the entrails, orders them to be divided into 300 pieces, and compelled each of his slaves to eat one, threatening with the same torture those who refuse would. The second was a woman; hanging from a mast, she is first whipped until she bleeds; 'then we removed more than a hundred pieces of flesh with until the bones were bare' and she died (Vaissiere 162).

Traders packed Africans on board like cargo, densely stacking their bodies in galleries above one another without room to breathe or move (James 9). Dehydration, starvation, and widespread illness raised mortality rates among Africans in the middle passage (Kipple and Higgins 442). And, as illustrated in Vaisseire descriptions above, the brutality of slave traders killed many Africans before they reached Saint Domingue's shores.

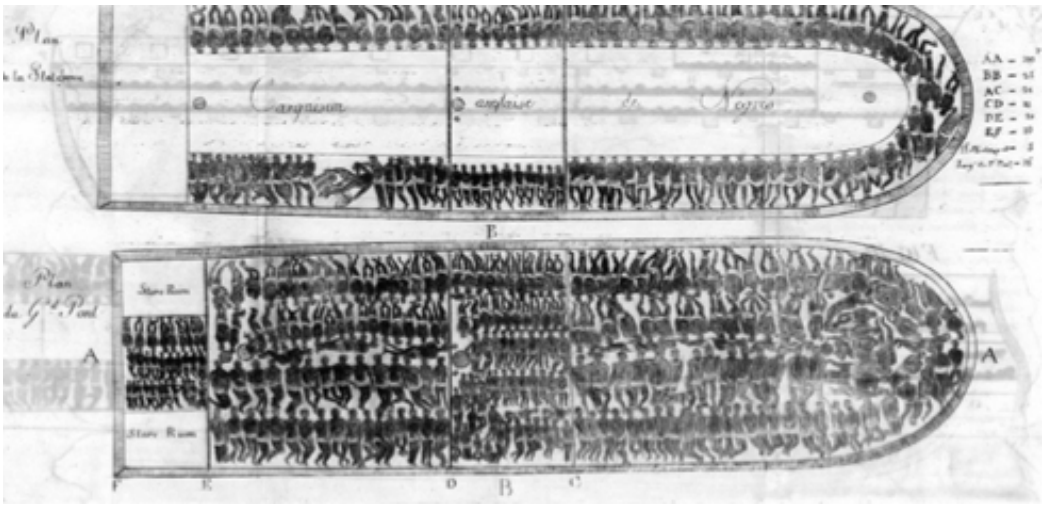

Fig. 7. A diagram of the decks of slave ships; Jennifer L., Morgan. *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic.* Duke University Press, Durham, 2021.

As the site of their social death, Saint Domingue was a disaster for Africans, from which France reaped a fortune.[3] Discussions on Haiti often refer to Saint-Domingue as the richest colony in the world, implying that colonialism brought general prosperity," but slavery was only prosperous to who enslaved (Taber 239). At its height of production Saint Domingue earned more for France than all of England's thirteen colonies combined, but at what cost? (Geggus 126). French property laws made it nearly impossible for Africans to use their work to buy their freedom, thereby barring Africans the benefits of their labor (Chatman 147). Colonialism irreversibly disrupted the lives of millions of Africans and divorced Black communities from their human right of self–governance. Most Africans lived three to seven years after capture and words cannot describe the viciousness of the slavery they faced (Taber 236).

There is a tendency of Western scholars to focus on Saint Domingue as an economic success without acknowledging the burden it caused its enslaved population (Taber 236). But it's impossible to separate Saint Domingue's success from France's violent commodification of

[3] Social death refers to the experiences of people not viewed as fully human by the dominant group in their societies. Without autonomy, the ability to induce chance, or access to their humanity, marginalized citizens exist in a space of society mirroring death as their existence is marked by alienation, silence, and erasure (Brodber 12).

Black bodies. Each pound of sugar, coffee, and indigo transported from Saint Domingue came from the dehumanization of Africans on the island. Enslaved Africans supported Saint Domingue's economy and turned the island into the "Pearl of the Antilles", one of the richest colonies in the world. Yet, enslaved Africans were violently alienated from the fruits of their labor. As forms of capital, slaves had no property rights of their own (Chatman 147). Subsequently Africans could not claim ownership of their labor to receive payment for their work. If any payments did come from their efforts, the payments were to go to their masters (Chatman 14).

Life under Enslavement

One of the greatest ironies of slavery is its "growth and entrenchment at a time when liberty and equality" were spreading throughout Europe (Arlyck 37). In fact, many of the horrors experienced by enslaved Blacks at the hands of Europeans up until the century occurred while France held tightly to the narrative that its shores were untouched by slavery (Chatman 145). This of course was untrue, France *had* been touched by slavery, if not through its physical enslavement of part of its population, then through the commercial goods cultivated in Saint Domingue, However, part of the reason why France was able to maintain an image of separation from slavery in its metropole is the Code Noir. *The Code Noir* was introduced to Saint Domingue in 1685 and was the first modern law regarding slavery in France (Chatman 145). With The *Code Noir* France not only justified slavery as their largest Christian endeavor designed to bring Africans closer to God and salvation.; but it also legally regulated slavery across the colony. This section describes the reality of life experienced by enslaved Blacks before freedom, showcasing France's use of chattel slavery to create capital through indigo, coffee, tobacco, and most famously for sugar.

Sugar cultivation was labor-intensive. It claimed the lives of many laborers: “those who fed the mill were liable, especially when tired or half-asleep, to have their fingers caught between the rollers. A hatchet was kept in readiness to sever the arm, which…no doubt explains the number of maimed watchmen”. Each plantation required enough acres to seed stalks, a sugar mill to clean and cut harvested stalks, a boiling house to reduce the juice, a curing house to drain the sugar, and a storehouse to place sugar before shipping. Sugar cane cultivation started with the breaking of compacted earth to facilitate the aeration of the plants. The cane required from fourteen to eighteen months to reach maturity at which time slaves gathered the harvest and rushed it to the mill to extract its sweet juice. Workers then boiled down this liquid to manufacture raw sugar. This last process took at least sixteen hours and made sugar production a highly organized practice composed of skilled laboring teams. During harvest laborers operated without stop, with cane cutting, grinding, boiling, and potting conducted simultaneously. Though slaves pioneered sugarcane cultivation, and sugar production methods later adopted by English, and Portuguese colonies, yet without restitution for the profit their techniques secure (Mintz 57, 70-71, 73).

Fig.8. A Negro Servant from America, picture taken from Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History; Sidney W., Mintz. Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History, Penguin Publishing Group, 1986. ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bates/detail.action?docID=5338039.

Fig. 9. View of the Sugar Mills (Vue Perspective Des Moulins de l'habitation); Detail of Map of the Housing Facilities of Févret de Saint-Mémin with Vignettes of Daily Life on the Plantation, Haiti (Saint-Domingue). gouache on white paper, 4th quarter.

The French treated Blacks worse than their cattle. Slaves in Saint Domingue were quite literally worked to death; and when they resisted, mutilation and physical torture were commonly employed as intimidation tactics (James 11). This is exemplified by limb amputations runaway slaves experienced (Boisvert 62). If caught, recaptured slaves were whipped by their masters (Boisvert 63). Once done, slave masters took their slaves and cut off an ear, exhibited the ear across their plantation as a warning to other slaves (Boisvert 63). As earlier noted, slaves were viewed as expendable property in Saint Domingue. As replaceable property, no amount of "amputation, torture, or disfiguring" inflicted by Europeans on their slaves could ever result in a loss that couldn't be fixed (Dayan, "Codes of Law and Bodies of Color" 287). Words cannot truly express the horror faced by enslaved Africans. Slavery normalized Black pain across the Caribbeans as it embedded Black suffering in each aspect of Saint Domingue. This mutilation of Black bodies further defined Africans as expendable tools in the colonial agenda. In support of colonialism, slavery decimated the worlds Black community. In Haiti, the culture of disaster began by slavery in Saint Domingue has entered its citizens to a world order reliant on Black pain. As such, the impacts of colonialism weren't reversible through Black freedom alone, Black communities need the space to enjoy their freedom through sovereignty.

Sexual exploitation was another aspect of enslaved life, particularly for Black women. White men viewed Black women on the island through the double lens of labor and sex. In terms of labor, colonialism required Black women to be ungendered— a term feminist scholar Hortense Spillers uses to describe racial capitalism's alienation of womanhood from Black identity in its justification of Black women as capital (Spillers 77). However, regardless of colonialism's attempts to divorce Black women from their womanhood, white masters still sexually desired Black women as they fantasize about naked "Negresses who throw their breast

about the shoulder" (Girard 64). And so, in terms of sex, colonialism at times re-gendered Black women so white men could fulfill their desires in unspeakable ways.

Without restraint, colonist raped and sexually exploited Black women in their possession, thereby incorporating sexual exploitation to the customary experiences of Black women. This isn't to say Black men weren't also fetishized, demeaned, and desired by their masters, but the fetishization of Black women was a unique experience in that it made them both hypervisibility and invisibility. As ungendered beings, female slaves "had no legal status" or rights to humanity (Donovan 148). But as beings gendered through their encounters with sexual abuse, Black women were constantly shifting between colonial structures of race and desire. The commodification Black women underwent during slavery has impacted the world's perception of them to this day. Black women are valued in dominant society when they are accruing capital — if not through physical labor, then through sexual fantasies. This process is further shown through the commodifying of Black birthing bodies.

While fertility among enslaved women in the Caribbeans was relatively low compared to North America, it's important to note colonialism in Saint Domingue in small part also relied on the reproductive labor of Black women (Morrisey 111). In *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh*, Daina Ramey Berry explains during the height of enslavement Black women were valued for their future increase (Berry 14). Decrees like *The Code Noir* ensured slavery's self-sustainability by tying one's enslavement to the legal status of their mothers (Berry 14). This ensured not only that slavery could only be passed down by enslaved women, but that in the case of their masters' sexual advances any children produced would belong to their father as property. Consequently, the creation of a new laboring class became a secondary role of Black women's experiences in slavery, avoided through reproductive justice and if lucky, marronage (Morrisey 113).

Marronage — temporary or long-term escape from enslavement—was a powerful form of resistance (Eddins, “Runaways, Repertoires, and Repression” 5). As argued by Haitian scholar Jean Casmir “marronage was a fundamentally anti-capitalist mode of resistance, socio-political critique, and grassroots mobilization” (Eddins, “Maroon Movements Against Empire” 219). Through it, enslaved Africans reclaimed ownership over their bodies and created a space free from coloniality. This helped them rediscover their humanity and lost cultures. Maroon communities settled in the island's mountainous region, with some communities dating back to before the Treaty of Ryswick, (Eddins, “Runaways” 5). Escaped slaves who found their way to maroon communities were welcomed with open arms and given full rights to participate in the group’s governance. Not only did maroon communities represent hope for Africans escaping their plantations, but as early leaders of the island's resistance, maroons raided neighboring plantations to liberate other Africans (Eddins, “Maroon Movements” 228). For those who were able to escape slavery, marronage was the closest Blacks came to returning home to Africa. Besides marronage, other forms of resistance have appeared in popular Caribbean novels like *The Salt Roads*.

Excerpts from the Code Noir:

"**Article II**

All the slaves who will be in our Islands will be baptized and instructed on the Catholic religion.

Article III

We forbid the public exercise of any religion other than the Catholic."

Article V

We forbid our subjects… to disturb or prevent our other subjects, even their slaves from the free exercise of Catholic religion.

Article VI

We charge all our subjects… to observe Sundays and holidays that are kept by the Catholic religion. We forbid them to… make their slaves work on these days" (Arlyck 39).

"**Article XII**

The children who will be born of marriage between slaves will be slaves and will belong to the master of the women slaves.

Article XIII

[I]f a slave husband has married a free woman, the children, both male and girl will be free like her… and that if the father is free and the mother enslaved, the children will be slaves" (Arlyck 39).

Hopkinson and Resistance

The enslaved population of Saint Domingue resisted in different ways depending on their positionality. For some resistance manifested through marronage, but for others resistance manifested in more subtle ways like community-building and self-love. Regardless, resistance reminded slaves of the true instability of colonialism, as well as their power to combat the chaos of slavery through community. Jamaican-Canadian writer Nalo Hopkinson centers the complexity of resistance in her novel the *Salt Roads*. Written as a collection of songs to Ezili, the Salt Roads is primarily narrated through women touched by Ezili, the Vodun water spirit of love and sensuality, and represents the importance of Vodun and memory in Haiti's journey of resistance.

Vodun's sacred symbol system, provides knowledge to its practitioners through sacred metaphors, ancestral worship, and language (Murphy 184). As a space of resistance, Vodun is a religion based in action and is carried out across the African diaspora through ritual and the invocations of spirits, (lwa in Kreyol) through dance, drumbeats, and offerings (Murphy 184). Vodun finds power in its ability to syncretize with the institutions around it and unlike most religions, Vodun doesn't require a written text— its teachings are rooted in its practitioner's relationship with memory and the body. The syncretism intrinsic to Vodun can be understood its ability to center practitioners in their sense of self as they gravitate towards the sacred, a shared space of knowledge (Murphy 194). For example, despite The Code Noir's strict ban of Vodun, clever practitioners freely practiced their religion by infusing Catholic traditions with their interpretations of the divinity (Eich 2). Catholic figures such as the Virgin Mary, and Saint Peter, became stand-in for practitioners' invocations of Ezili Freda, lwa of motherhood womanhood and

sensuality, as well as Papa Legba, lwa of doorways and crossroads, thus allowing them to continue communing with their ancestors and connecting with others (Eich 2).

As a religion in constant movement, Vodun's fluidity makes it the perfect vessel for Black resistance and has played a critical role in Haiti's encounter with disaster. It's for these reasons Hopkinson orients her text toward these sacred practices. The novel begins with Mer, an enslaved Ginen woman on her plantation in St. Domingue.[4] Mer is a healer in communication with her ancestors and has survived enslavement through the power of the erotic. The erotic is an innate power inside the body, comparable to the sacred imagined in Vodun. As defined by Audre Lorde, the erotic is a "deeply feminine and spiritual plane firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling" (Lorde 56). It exists at the intersection of identity and memory as profound knowledge liberated through desire. Slavery operates on the assumption that the human body and soul can be fully owned, but the sacred (e.g the erotic), inculcates in the colonized individual in a sense of self that is untouchable by physical experiences of oppression. Although it seems to Mer's masters that she's lost faith in freedom, Mer is one of the most dangerous Ginen on her plantation as a result of the power she's finds inside her memories.

Ezili is attracted by Mer's power early in the novel and challenges Mer to revive the salt roads, Ezili's spiritual route between the Ginen and their ancestral home Guinea (Africa). "The sea is in the minds of my Ginen, the salt roads. And the sweet ones, too; the rivers…You must fix it Mer" (Hopkinson 65). Initially Mer is unsure of what Ezili means, especially as she watches the Makandal, one of Haiti's most legendary rebels, encourage the Ginen to kill their masters. Though she wants freedom, Mer is unsure if Makandal's rebellion is Ezili's way, at least not until

[4] Ginen is a specific Haitian term for Africans, and their ancestral home, Africa.

the Ginen remember who they are. And in return, although Makandal respects Mer, he is unwilling to force the Ginen to wait to be free, viewing tradition as a less critical part of their resistance.

The beauty of Hopkinson's writing is its ability to mirror the internal turmoil held by enslaved Africans through Makandal and Mer's clash. Rebellion, and memory are both important aspects of resistance, as rebellion offers a path towards physical freedom and memory offers a path towards identity formation power. By having Makandal and Mer represent seemingly opposing sides of resistance, Hopkinson demonstrates to her audience that true freedom is experienced physically and spiritually. As the novel progresses, tension between Mer and Makandal escalates until finally the two leaders lose what's most important to them — for Makandal it's his physical presence in his community, and for Mer it's her voice.

While this ending may seem like the end of resistance in the novel, the loss experienced by Makandal and Mer highlights the complexity of tradition in understanding the future. The last the reader sees of Makandal is his physical body's being set on fire, "the burning thing that had been a collapsed" in embers (Hopkinson 349). But through memory Makandal's bravery lives on in the hearts of the Ginen, a feat documented through the buzzing fly Hopkinson implies is Makandal reincarnated. For most of the novel Makandal scorns tradition as most clearly revealed when Makandal refuses to eat salt, the food of the Gods. Yet, Makandal is reminded of the real purpose of Vodun, to connect us with our ancestors, by his death and rebirth. In the case of Mer, the loss of her voice at first appears to be a loss of her power. However, she soon realizes that her role with the Ginen isn't necessarily to lead them, but to remind them of their own ability to connect with their humanities deep inside themselves. Mer realizes alongside the Ginen

surrounding her that in their memories lay Ezili's saltroads, and therefore their spiritual pathway to Africa.

Resistance disrupts colonialism's cycle of disaster in its ability to return the colonized back to their understanding of who they were before colonialism. As richly illustrated by Hopkinson through Mer and Makandal's journey to understand resistance, so long as the colonized remember their history, their humanity can never truly be erased. Slavery in Haiti's past divorced alienated Africans from their sense of identity and power. Yet through resistance, enslaved Africans reconstituted community from the memories they shared among themselves and their veneration of their ancestors. Hopkinson's use of Vodun, and Ezili, Haiti's patron deity, comes from Ezili's role of Bois Kayman.

Nation-Building & Revolution

> "National liberation, nation reawakening, restoration of the nation to the people of the commonwealth, whatever the name used, whatever the latest expression, decolonization is always a violent event" (Fanon 1).
> – Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*

The Haitian Revolution began in 1791 at Bois Kayman.[5] Bois Kayman played a pivotal role in enslaved Blacks nation building in its instrumentalizing of Vodun to define community. A nation is an imagined community, constructed by the people who perceive themselves as members of an extended family (Clark et al. 107). As members of the same fictive network of kinship, citizens within a nation are bound together in their shared desire to redefine the world around them. One of Vodun's functions is to create a kind of family much as nations do.

[5] Bois Kayman translates to Allegator Forest. It describes the location where the Haitian revolution was blessed by the lwa.

Vodun's ability to expand and to incorporate new members into its fold illustrates the elasticity of the community it creates. Each member is a brother or a sister, a daughter or a son, who gather to worship their deities. Before slaves could fight against their masters and create their own nation, they first had to be a united community. Vodun helped facilitate this. Family members in Vodun are in constant communication with one another, whether they are dead or alive. And as a practice rooted in the body's actions and memory, Vodun practitioners can constitute their community in any given space (Murphy 184). This made Vodun the perfect vessel for the creation of community, and by extension, Haiti by way of revolution.

Fig.10. Dieudonné Cédors' depiction of Bois Caïman;Dieudonné, Cédor, 1925-. *Ceremony at the Bois Caiman, 1791*. [n.d.]. Collège St. Pierre (Port-au-Prince, Haiti). Musée d'art haïtien, *JSTOR*, https://jstor.org/stable/community.13918409. Accessed 10 Feb. 2023.

On August 21, enslaved Africans made their way to Bois Kayman to join Dutty Boukman and Cecile Fatimah, two powerful rebel Vodun priest (James 86). Maroons, slaves, and free Blacks alike navigated through torrential rain to invoke the spirits of revolution. Of those summoned, Ezili Dantor is the most important. Ezili Dantor represents womanhood, fertility, creativity, sensuality, and motherhood. Ezili is a lwa born on the soils of Haiti, with no precedent

in Dahomey or Yourbaland (Dayan "Erzulie: A Women's History of Haiti" 6). As a purely Haitian lwa, Ezili was tethered to Blacks experiences with slavery and reflected their desires for change. For that reason or revolution, Ezili was the perfect spirit to summon for the purposes of revolution. After leading the Vodun incantation Fatimah sacrificed a black pig as an offering to Ezili Dantor, and Bois Kayman honored Ezili as the mother of Haiti and furnished her as the patron spirit to the lost, those in search of love, and practitioners searching for the erotic. The role of Vodun in religion is most reflected in Boukman's prayer:

> The god who created the sun which has given us light, who rouses the waves and rules the storm, through hidden in the clouds, he watches us. He sees all that the white man does. The god of the white man inspires him with crime, but our god calls upon us to do good works. Our god who is good to us orders us to revenge our wrongs. He will direct our arms and aid us. Throw away the symbol of the god of the whites who has so often caused us to weep, and listen to the voice of liberty, which speaks in the heart of us all" (James 87).

Fig. 11. Ulrick Jean-Pierre and Ernest Prophète paintings of Bois Caïman; Courtney, Young. "Painting Mystery and Memory: Bois Caïman in Visual Art." *The Black Atlantic*, 2 May 2014, https://sites.duke.edu/blackatlantic/sample-page/storytelling-and-representation-of-bois-caiman/painting-and-bois-caiman/.

The following morning enslaved Africans across northern Saint-Domingue began their revolution. They murdered their masters and burned their plantations to the ground; “for nearly three weeks the people of Le Cap could barely distinguish day from night… a rain of cane straw driven before the wind like flakes of snow… over the city and the shipping in the harbor, threatening both with destruction” (James 88). The French elite had viewed enslaved Africans as expendable labor; and for this reason, were oblivious to the possibility that the Africans were formidable foes. Of the half a million slaves living at Saint Domingue more than 370,000 were raised somewhere in Africa in 1791 (Dubois 21). Some enslaved Africans had been herbalists, strategists, and warriors, in their respective communities. This made them natural leaders during the revolution (Dubois 23). When the time for revolution came many of them were already “well versed in the use of firearms, and experienced in military tactics involving small, mobile, autonomous units”: guerilla warfare (Dubois 23). In less than a month rebels across the colony destroyed over a thousand sugar and coffee plantations, beginning the Haitian revolution (Ferrer 40).

The Haitian revolution was a bloody affair that lasted over twelve years. The most prominent leader to rise during this time was Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Dessalines was a former slave himself, and experienced excessive violence and brutality from his master (Gaffield 2). His experiences during slavery not only connected Dessalines with the colony's masses but also made him a powerful voice in Saint Domingue (Gaffield 2). After many battles, Haiti won its revolution on November 29 1803, when Dessalines signed a peace treaty with French General Joseph Rochambeau (Gaffield 4). On January 1, 1804, Haiti legally gained its independence from France and officially became the first successful slave revolution in the world (James 366). Across the islands Haitians rejoiced in celebration, drinking the once forbidden soup joumou

(pumpkin soup) as a symbol of their freedom. To this day this tradition is still very intact along the Haitian diaspora. When one drinks the soup, usually accompanied by Haitian hot chocolate and hard dough bread, they do so in memory of the Haitians who fought for freedom.

How Indemnities Continued Slavery

Reparations are the act or process of making amends for past wrongs. Though reparations are often understood as monetary compensation, when done correctly reparations can mean more than this (Bhabha et al. 263). The goal of reparations is to provide harmed communities access to resources vital to life, self-governance, and healing that had been denied to them. Reparations constitute the acknowledgement of harm; they are in the form of apology through which marginalized plaintiffs gain the visibility required for justice. There are four complementary forms of reparations helpful to communities harmed by imperial violence: a formal apology, monetary compensation, restitution of misappropriated properties, and sustainable tools for victim empowerment (Bhabha et al. 263). Colonialism's mutilation of Black anatomies and exploitation of Black labor in every way demand that reparations be paid.

As this project asserts, colonialism is the largest disaster faced by Haitians and the world at large. Colonialism created a tradition of development reliant on the exploitation of Black bodies and their subsequent dehumanization for Europe's survival. At its peak, the African slave trade accrued over 22 trillion dollars for colonial empires and destroyed Black personhood throughout the globe (HofstraUniversity n.p). In 2013 the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) developed a National Committees on Reparations and a Reparations Commission to establish a moral, ethical, and legal case for "the payment of reparations by the former colonial European countries to the nations and peoples of the Caribbean Community" (Figueroa-Vásquez 117). In their legal case for reparations CARICOM denounced colonialism for its "racialized system of

chattel slavery…[and] native genocide" and silence as an aftermath of imperial violence" (Figueroa-Vásquez 117). However, despite their best-efforts Haiti, like many Caribbean nations, has never received reparations.[6] In fact, after its revolution Haiti was forced to send reparations to France.

On July 3 1825, King Charles X, sent an armada of fourteen warships armed with 528 cannons to surround the shores of Haiti (Alcenat 6). He demanded 150,000,000 thousand francs (21 billion dollars today) "as indemnity for the losses incurred by the former colonist and payable in five equal installments granted to Haiti… an independence which the Haitians had conquered at the price of hard and bloody sacrifices" (Alcenat 6). France hadn't forgotten the island of Hispaniola and was determined to re enslave their previous colony, if not physically then economically. Haiti's leader, Jean-Pierre Boyer, was given two options: agree to the indemnities or enter war again with the French. Reluctantly Boyer agreed to pay and received France's "double debt" (Alcenat 6).

France knew that Haiti could not afford the first installment of their indemnities, and to pay their first installment Haiti was forced to take a 24,000,000-franc loan from France with interest. This meant Haiti would now owe their initial debt of 150,000,000 Francs in addition to the money later borrowed from French banks to keep up their payments (Daut). With the reparations France demanded from Haiti, France continued its parasitic economic relationship with Haitians for decades—once again divorcing Haitians from the benefits of their labor. The West's tradition of punishing Haiti for its experiences with disasters can therefore be traced back to France's inversion of reparations; especially since their call for amends re-presented Haiti's revolution as a crime against the colonial community.

[6] President Aristide made a public call for reparations from France during his leadership, but his calls were unsuccessful.

It took Haiti 122 years to pay off its debts to France, and not without severe consequences (Daut n.p). A racial wealth gap was created by the indemnities Haiti paid France and has radically impaired the quality of life in Haiti. In 2020, the average median household income reported in France was 31,112 dollars a year, but in Haiti it was only 450 dollars (Daut). In "When France Extorted Haiti—The Greatest Heist in Haitian history," Marlen Dertes says

> These discrepancies are the concrete consequence of stolen labor from generations of Africans and their descendants. And because the indemnity Haiti paid to France is the first and only time a formerly enslaved people were forced to compensate those who had once enslaved them, Haiti should be at the center of the global movement for reparations.

The prosperity and autonomy that independence was meant to provide Haitians was undercut by colonialism's exacting of reparations. Money that should have gone to nation building, and agricultural development was wasted sustaining France. The indemnities Haiti paid taught Haitians their freedom came with consequences. And without the ability to engage freely in global trade, economic development, and political sovereignty Haiti found itself back at the center of the world's colonial disaster.

As an enduring crime against humanity, no amount of money can erase the colonialism's violence, but in combination with land access, "sustainable tools for victim empowerment", and the "reconstitution of misappropriated properties", reparations could help develop stability for victims seeking justice (Bhabha et al. 263). By stealing Haiti's right to reparations, and making it it's own, France destroyed a viable means for Haiti to alleviate the disaster which is colonialism. Without proper accountability placed on colonial empires to provide restitutions and amends to colonized communities, colonialism continues to benefit from Black laboers, thus making its and its use of slavery an unresolved trauma shared by Haitians.

Summary

The oldest and largest disaster in Haiti is colonialism. Coloniality has irreversibly disfigured the quality of life, the landscape, and community for its colonized people, thereby perpetuating anti-Blackness. Antiblackness, he placement of Black peoples towards a closer proximity to death through their marginalization from resources, is at the foundation of all colonial societies. As a byproduct of colonial structures, generations of Black communities impacted by the colonial empire live in a state of second-class citizenship, marked by exploitation, state sanctioned violence, sexual commodification, and death. Though Haitians freed themselves from slavery, colonialism continues to define the reality of life in Haiti. Regardless, Haiti is still a home to strength, spirituality, wisdom and resistance. As the world's first free Black republic, Haiti represents to the rest of the world the power of community in combating the colonial disaster. Thus, although Haiti's fight for sovereignty is ongoing, Haiti represents the possibility of change.

Chapter 3: Colonialism as Haiti's Duppy—Occupation & Neocolonialism

The Caribbean is haunted by duppies. Duppy means or is related to "ghost". They are the shadow of memories so powerful that they are tethered to the earth as fragments of what they once were. Some are known by name such as "Rolling Calf", the vengeful chained spirit of a butcher who committed sins in life. Others have remained nameless. In this regard, the Caribbean is a space of fragmented spirits, trapped in cycles of rebirth, memory, and death. While duppies don't exist in Haitian folklore; they replaced instead by the more popularized zombie story, colonialism is Haiti's duppy. It shakes the earth and tumbles homes; it plants seeds of wealth then steals it from the people; it mythologizes freedom before enslaving nations overnight; colonialism is the disaster that cannot seem to die.

Fable has it that duppies come nine days after death; they are born from tainted bits of earthly souls left behind. The impact of colonialism, and more specifically indemnities, are the duppies of Haiti. Indemnities haunt Haitians as a memory of what independence could have meant for the nation. Resources that should have benefits Haiti's growing economy instead went to the West as Haiti's punishment for their freedom. Additionally, as Haiti's debt to France grew, so did the role of other colonial powers in Haiti. The United States has aided France in putting Haiti in a constant cycle of debt and has played an insidious role in the affairs of the impoverished. Fordham University Professor Westenley Alcenat beautifully summarized the unexpected consequences of France indemnities as one that excused American intervention into Haitian domestic affairs (Alcenat 7). The results of this debt include but are not limited to:

- Deforestation: Haiti once had the most fertile land in the Western hemisphere. However, as a direct result of the colonial disaster, much of Haiti's beautiful island was cleared first for the established of plantations during French rule. After

post-independence they harvested mahogany in bulk to finance their growing debt to the U.S and France (Katz 110). Haiti then used what remained for lumber, farming, and cooking fuel (Katz 110). While a temporary solution to Haiti's growing debt, deforestation made way for more catastrophe such as the flooding of towns and cities by rivers once held back by forest.

- Increased foreign aid: Foreign aid has historically failed to help Haiti stand on its own. Foreign aid appears to be an inversion of coloniality. The normal flow of resources and goods in most colonial supports are from the colonized to the colonizer. However, under the guise of assistance, foreign aid seems to reorient this relationship and flow goods from the colonizer to the colonized. But this is not the case. Foreign aid destroys the economic independence the colonized have created for themselves through the colonizer's introduction of their goods. Subsequently, once the colonizer's have withdrawn their resources from the colonized, they can no longer sustain themselves, and must turn to the West again for assistance. For example, before 1970 Haiti's economy was almost entirely self-sufficient (Bellgarde-Smith et al. 37). In the 1990's Bill Clinton's administration enacted a series of interventions in Haiti under the guise of aid. The introduction of American rice is one of the consequences of Clintons actions that transformed Haiti's economy (Bellegarde-Smith et al. 37). It put rice farmers in Haiti out of business and created a dependency in the nation for American goods. Foreign aid has weakened Haiti's agricultural economy and made Haiti reliant on foreign good. Thereby leaving Haiti without resources to sustain itself time and time again. While aid may seem like a solution to Haiti's problems,

without proper allocation, or insight from the Haitian people foreign aid loses its stability as a useful structure.

- Political influence and occupations: The U.S took the opportunity and even occupy Haiti every time there seemed to be a sign of social of political upheaval. Foreign troops occupied the island at four times under the guise of aid, and each time left with a larger role in Haitian sovereignty that possessed before.

Independence could not deliver on its promise of Haitian prosperity. Instead, Haiti experienced foreign interference in its politics and an economic exploitation of its resources. Both are manifestations of colonial disaster, the logical aftermath of enslavement. This chapter examines the long-term effects of Haiti's indemnities through its analysis of U.S occupation and its cultural impact on Haitian identity.

"Question: Is it a duppy calf?
Answer: It is a duppy. It is like a calf, big like a goat.
Q: Is he afraid he might get hurt?
A: I don't know, Sir. I hear it make with the world.
Q: Have you heard of a three-legged horse?
A: Oh yes, Sir. We have one pass from Two River to Orange Valley every November month. A three-foot horse, and him living at a roadside every night. Him living there when it coming on to most Christmas, and every night we hear it, cut-i-cup, coot-i-cup, coot-i-cup. Him run on tree foot.
Q: Have you ever seen it?
A: De horse, Sir? No Sir. I never see it because when it pass around tree o'clock or three-thirty. And dat time we in our bed. We never see it but hear" (Leach 209).

The Historical Background to U.S Occupation

Unexpectedly, the United States benefited greatly from Haiti's revolution The war weakened France's role in the West and forced the French to sell their territory in North America to the US with under the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. This allowed the US to expand their growing slave empire westward, and nearly doubled their original size. The power the US gained from the Louisiana purchase was bolstered by the Monroe doctrine of 1823, which warned Europe not to engage in the affairs of the Americas (Bellegarde-Smith et al. 14). Thereby the US's policement of the Western hemisphere is a direct result of Haiti's independence, and without Haiti the US could not be the settler empire it is today.

Now the strongest power in the Americas, the Caribbean became the "backyard" of America's empire (Bellegarde-Smith et al.17). Geographically Haiti is a perfect resource for the US. Its shores are only two hours away; thus, its location provides a perfect stopping point for port for trade, and easy access to small island's untapped natural resources. Haiti's climate is also perfect for the cultivation of sugar, rubber, sisal and bananas (Bellegarde-Smith et al.16; Robertshaw 6). Through Haiti, the US would have access to much of the Caribbean.

U.S Occupation

The payment of indemnities intensified pre-existing weaknesses in Haiti; i.e class divisions and political instability. And in 1908 the nation's instability reached its boiling point with the overthrow of General Nord Alexis by General Antione Simon (Castor and Garafola 254). By 1915 Haiti already experienced four governmental regimes in that decade alone and struggled to manage the growing weight of its economic debt. The tensions in Haiti culminated to President Vulbrun Guillaume Sam assassination July 28 1915 (Castor and Garafola 254).

After President Guillaume Sam's death the US deemed Haitians incapable of creating a lasting stable government because of their race. For decades the U.S refused to acknowledge Haiti as a sovereign state on account of its Blackness, but by finally recognizing Haiti as a nation during the late nineteenth century, the U.S could use race as the premise of any later foreign intervention. Although the U.S would need justifiable reasons to forcefully occupy another nation, it is naive to assume the U.S wouldn't have occupied Haiti without the added context of Haiti's political instability. Under manifest destiny—the US's divine white right to spread their ideals across the world— the US could enter any nation unchecked so long as it could be tied back to their spread of democracy. While President Sam's death afforded the U.S the excuse to invade the island, it would be naïve to this this colonial disaster was not inevitable. this is how the colonial disaster functions. The US championed their time in Haiti as progressive imperialism, a newer form of white man's burden. (Bellegarde-Smith et al. 18).

And how heavy the white man's burden was. To the US, Haiti was a failed nation state populated by the "inferior, savage, … backward-looking" dark cannibals of the tropics (Bellegarde-Smith et al. 17). Its people practiced devil worship openly, were proud of their inferior African heritage, and led their government through violence. They would be perfect for the U.S next conquest. A large majority of incoming occupiers were from the American south, including chief military official Admiral William B. Caperton who led much of the early occupation. US soldiers brought with them a deep hatred towards Black people, and social Darwinism (Sommers 55). The rise of social Darwinism provided a scientific rationale for manifest destiny through its discourse of white genetic superiority. (Sommers 55). Emboldened by science and religion, U.S. officials stressed to the world it was their job as the genetically superior nation to "subju[gate] foreigners in order to save them" (Sommers 55). This all

manifested in the creation of a racial hierarchy across the island, associating eurocentric features with civility and afro-centric features with savagery.

One of the first actions carried out by the U.S at the start of occupation was to move Haiti's financial reserves to America (Danticat, "The Long Legacy of Occupation in Haiti." n.p). Another action was to rewrite the Haitian constitution to better suit the interest of the U.S. For example, the US added clause which gave foreigners land-owning rights (Danticat, "Long Legacy"). Haiti's founders fought hard to deny foreigners access to Haitian land, which for years twarted U.S exploitation. However, with this clause, U.S officials, businesses, and global associates could take full advantage of Haiti's natural resources. With stronger control over Haiti's government, the U.S created a new national military composed of U.S soldiers, and U.S trained Haitians (Sommers, 59; Danticat "Long Legacy"). The gendarmerie, as the U.S would call it, lasted in Haiti after the U.S left, ensuring the nation would be led through a strong authoritarian rule modeled after America.

Fig. 11. A group of Haitian prisoners gathered by US troops for disobedience; "U.S. Occupation of Haiti (1915)." *Fotki*, https://public.fotki.com/pikliz/very_old_pictures/us_occupation_of_haiti/?view=roll#9.

Next, the U.S. moved to modernize Haitian infrastructure through the corvée system. Corvée is an unpaid labor system analogous to slavery. The U.S wanted to attract businessmen to

invest in the island but did not have the money or manpower to industrialize Haiti on their own. The corvee system was their means for doing that. Thousands of Haitians were forced to work on road construction without pay, mirroring life under French colonization (Robertshaw 6). Sadly, these are only a few of the horrors Haitians experienced under U.S rule.

Although some members of the mulatto bourgeois class supported the U. S's occupation, many Haitians resisted. Upper-class urban citizens experimented with nonviolent resistance, and in the rural areas of Haiti peasant guerrillas. Cacos, fought against US marines (Plummer 72). Armed citizens rose against the U.S without fear as they sought justice for native property stolen for military use, the countless murders of unarmed Haitian civilians, and the deep censorship Haitian papers faced (Danticat, "Long Legacy"). Though US forces-controlled Haiti's largest city, Port-au-Prince, they faced insurrections throughout Haiti rural communities (Plummer 72).

Resistance was not easy. U.S marines policed the nation ruthlessly and killed resistors indiscriminately. Arguably the most violent consequence to Haitian resistance happened in Les Cayes, Haiti, on December 6 1929. On this day thousands of Haitians peacefully came together as a part of a nationwide labor strike against rising taxes, economic conditions, and the ongoing occupation. The U.S being the kind purveyors of liberty and justice they are fired at fifteen hundred unarmed people, wounding twenty-three Haitians and killing twelve in what was later remembered as the Les Cayes Massacre (Danticat, "Long Legacy").

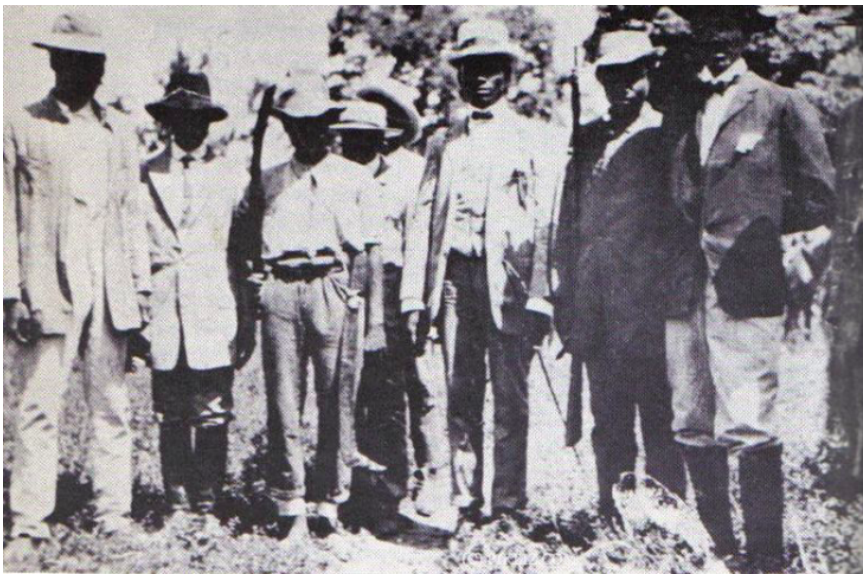

Fig.12. Charlemagne Péralte, Cacos leader, and his supporters; "U.S. Occupation of Haiti (1915)." Fotki, https://public.fotki.com/pikliz/very_old_pictures/us_occupation_of_haiti/?view=roll#9.

Yet, even as the U.S attempted to silence Haitian activists on the island, resistance to U.S imperialism occurred around the world. Haiti has always kept a strong relationship with its siblings in the African diaspora. During the heights of the American Civil War Haiti offered safe passage, and land citizenship to Black Americans who could make it to free ships traveling from New Orleans to Haiti. And with gradual migration to Jamaica, America, Panama, and other nations, members of the Haitian intellectual community gained a stronger foothold in the world's growing Black nationalist movement (Plummer 73). In homage to this relationship, over time Haiti's anti-occupation movement would include prominent leaders from the U. S's own civil rights movement, intellectuals from the Harlem renaissance, and encouraged the rise of Garveyism within the Caribbeans.

> “In my own family, there were many stories. My grandfather was one of the Cacos, or so-called bandits, who retired American Marines have always written about in their memories. They would be called insurgents now, the thousands who fought against the occupation. One of the stories my grandfather’s oldest son, my uncle Joseph, used to tell was of watching a group of young Marines kicking around a man’s decapitated head in effort to frighten the rebels in their area… of the Marine’s boots sounding like Galipot, a fabled three-legged horse, which all children were supposed to fear… of the black face that the Marines wore to blend in and hide from wide. Of the time U.S. Marines assassinated one of the occupation’s most famous fighters, Charlemagne Péralte, and pinned his body to a door, where it was left to rot in the sun for days” (Danticat, “Long Legacy”).
> — Edwidge Danticat

Vodun During & After Occupation

The US's occupation was disastrous not only politically and economically but also culturally for Haiti. Vodun is Haiti's cultural tether to Africa. It connects Haitians with their ancestors as the religion originally used to define Haitian nationality. In addition, Vodun facilitates healing to Haitian communities in ways that Christianity cannot begin to imagine. With this said, it only makes sense that Vodun was the first community pillar the American's demonized. Foreigners have been fearful of Vodun for generations, aware of its ability to liberate its followers from whatever pain their bodies might be enduring. When the Americans came, Haiti's Vodun became *voodoo,* a terrain of "demonic possession, absurd superstitions, and zombies' ' presented to the West as the reason behind Haiti's incivility and laziness (Dubois 92). To terrorize the Haitian people, American officers: destroyed hounfourts, decimated historical sites, publicly humiliated practitioners, renamed Bois Kayman as Haiti's, "devil pact," and set in place the legal guidelines used in 1935 to create a penal category for Vodun practice (Bellegarde-Smith et al. 29; Louis 3).[7]

Acknowledging the syncretism between Catholicism and Vodun, the American's decided Catholicism was too tolerant of Vodun to lead a "large-scale transformation of the society and for disciplining Haitians who refused to follow the US occupiers' lead" (Bellegarde-Smith et al. 25). Subsequently, Haitians were encouraged to convert to Protestantism instead, a sect of Christianity that dismissed the legitimacy of Vodun as a sacred practice. Protestant missionaries arrived to Haiti to help the US police Haitians, and establish new churches, schools, and social programs throughout the island (Louis 4). Though religion seems insignificant, it offense lens through which practitioners see themselves and the world around them. The embrace of Afro-

[7] Hounfourts are Vodun sites.

centrism by Haitian revolutionaries is what has made Haiti's journey towards liberation inspiring. Haiti's African identity presents to the world a possibility of Black radical sovereignty free from colonial advances. However, in denying Haitians access to Vodun, the ancestral religion, the US effectively aided in the erasure of Haitian's African identity and weakened one of the nation's most effective means for disaster resistance and community building.

After the U. S's occupation of Haiti in the early twentieth century, Protestantism gained eminence over Vodun not only through its social programs, and in by repositioning itself as a form of protection from Vodun's pantheons of *lwa* which were demonized by U.S missionaries. Under Protestant theology, every problem Haiti faced could be answered with a biblical interpretation of Haitian misdeeds. If there was a bad harvest, unexpected illness, hurricane, flood, or famine, Protestant missionaries made clear it was because the Haitian people had angered God with their sin. And because Vodun is largely practiced by rural Haitians, rural Haitian practitioners to this day still bear the brunt of Protestant blame. By the twenty-first century, Protestantism replaced the spiritual support that Vodun provided for thousands of Haitians, encouraging Haitians to win "Haiti for Jesus", if they want to see their problems end. In using Vodun as a scapegoat for the political instability, environmental disasters, and rising unemployment, created by Euro-American interference in Haitian affairs, colonialism remains blameless in the West interpretations of Haiti's state. Protestantism further aids in this process, by offering colonial resources as a way out of the damages created by colonial actions (Lous 3-4, 8).

As a partial result of American interference, Christianity now occupies a confusing place within the lives of those suffering from Haiti's colonial disaster. For many like my mother Christianity offers a space for community. As a Haitian immigrant, now living in America, my

mother often describes her struggle to find community: " lè mwen te sot vini mwen pa t gen pèsonn, sèlman bondye mwen," when I first came, I had no one, only God. Through Christianity my mother found a way to ground herself in her journey across America, and access other Haitians like her who were navigating the Americanization process. However, for those like me, Christianity holds the pains of erasure, sexual confusion, and shame. Although Christianity can be a helpful resource for many Haitians on an individual level, as an institution Christianity has taught Haitians to be ashamed of their African heritage, fear the fluidity of their traditional customs, and therefore shy away from the beauty of their innate Blackness.

> "[the mission of Protestantism is] to evangelize the Haitian people and to win the Haitian soul for Christ; to transform Haiti into a Christian nation and to eradicate Vodou from the Haitian soil" (Lous 2).
> — Celucien Joseph

Linguistic Injustice

In the 1918 constitution the U.S formalized French as the national language of Haiti, even though the overwhelming portion of the population could neither write nor speak French. Part of this came from occupiers' own incompetence. In the early stages of occupation, Americans recognized vestiges of French in Kreyol and made the false assertion that Kreyol was a bastardized version of French. The Haitian bourgeoisie desired to remain as associated with the French as possible and supported the erasure of Kreyol in Haiti's governing system (Robertshaw 6, 8, 18).

The racism experienced by Haiti's elite class led to a rise in *mulâtrisme,* mulatto pride (Bellegarde-Smith et al. 24). However, American made no difference between mulatto elites and peasants. Both were Black, and both experienced racism the hands of the occupiers. Even with

the advantages experienced by lighter skin Haitians such as positions in government and land acquisition, Haiti's mulatto class tethered themselves as much as they could to their European roots as proof to the Americans of their inherited civility (Robert 14). This made it so even when the U.S–after realizing they would need to teach their troops Kreyol to control the masses–tried to legitimize Kreyol their advances failed (Robertshaw 11). The American's had expressed their superiority to Haitians throughout their occupation, which led to Haitian elites to view the U.S's new stance on Kreyol as a ruse meant to further disenfranchise the mulatto class. So rather than help legitimize Kreyol, Haitian elites placed their support in French. (Robertshaw 11). This of course had disastrous impacts on Haiti's rural peasant class without access to the French language. Haitians across the nation were denied access to social resources, legal representation, educational opportunities, and necessities on account of the language barrier created by French silencing Kreyol. It wouldn't be until 1940's under the leadership of President Éllie Lescot that Kreyol begun to be legitimized, and under the reign of President François Duvalier it would later be ratified as one of Haiti's national languages.

The US left Haiti in 1934 and left behind a changed nation. Years of occupation had gradually transformed Haiti into a major supplier of cheap labor, especially in Port-au-Prince. Haiti was now inextricably tied with the US economically, socially, and politically. As noted by Robert Fatton Jr in a special issue of the *Journal of Haitian Studies* coauthored by Patrick-Bellegarde-Smith, Alex Dupuy, Mary Renda, Ermitte St. Jacques, and Jeffrey Sommer, "to say that Haiti has become a trustee of the international community is no hyperbole; in fact, the manner in which elections are held and winners decided, indicated that the whole process is neither free nor fair and that it is certainly beyond Haitian control" (32).

In his upcoming documentary, *The Forgotten Occupation*, Alain Martin emphasizes that the time the US supposedly spent civilizing Haiti, put the nation back in a colonial relationship. The only difference between that of the US's actions and France's is that the US didn't require Haitians to be their long-term slaves, so long as the US could maintain economic and political sovereignty from afar. From a distance, the US can exploit and distribute Haitian resources to neighboring nations without employing the same resources and tactics needed to sustain a traditional colonial relationship. Occupation, and the American governing structures it set in place, drastically changed the trajectory of Haiti as a growing Black power in the Atlantic and set up neo-colonialism as a continuation of the colonial disaster.

> "Globalization has been with us a very long time, but it changes methods over time. President Préval made a similar statement that angered the US ambassador: that Haiti has suffered from globalization for the last five hundred years. Well, the methods have changed. We no longer have to send the US Marines. We can send the IMF, and the World Bank and we can send, certainly, MINUSTAH.. That clears the United States from seeming to act in bad faith" (Bellegarde-Smith et at. 35)
> —Patrick Bellegarde-Smith

Chapter 4: The Quake

Fig. 13. Community members saving valuable resources from a collapsed earthquake in Port-au-Prince seven days after the earthquake; Moises Saman. *HAITI. Port-au-Prince. January 19, 2010. Haitian Try to Salvage Any Valuables from a Destroyed Warehouse in Downtown Port-au-Prince in the Aftermath of January 12th's Earthquake. JSTOR*, https://jstor.org/stable/community.18995905. Accessed 27 Mar. 2023.

The earthquake hit Haiti on January 12 2010, at 4:53:10pm in Léogane. The maginitude seven quake destroyed parts of Port-au-Prince and decimated smaller cities in the southern part of the republic. In the two weeks that followed fifty-four aftershocks shook the nation, with tsunamis reported in Jacmel, Les Cayes, Petit Goâve, Léogane, Luly, and Anse á Galets. The earthquake, or it Douz[8] as Haitians would later call, displaced over 1.3 million Haitians, killed 230,000 people, and injured just as many. Churches, peristyles, schools, institutions, and

[8] Douz translates to twelve in Haitian Kreyol, and is a short hand used by Haitians to name the earthquake experienced on January twelfth 2010.

businesses that once stood strong were reduced to rubble in seconds. Haiti's earthquake has been described as the "natural disaster of the century" (Ulysse 92).

The day of the earthquake Wilson Octaveus was working in Les Cayes. Octaveus is a father of twelve children who lived in Pétionville, Port-au-Prince with his wife Getrude-Jean and daughters Wistandelle, Milauva, Cindy, and Shirley after moving to the city in 1984 for a better life (Beaumont n.p). After decades in the city, Octaveus proudly built his home from scratch and earned recognition as a successful landlord and businessman. Octaveus was four hours away from Port-au-Prince when he learned about the quake. Desperate to hear from his family, Octaveus tried calling his house but got no response (Beaumont). The night of the quake he paid cyclist after cyclist to try to get back to his family, but when he finally arrived in Pétionville his home was unrecognizable (Beaumont). Octaveus lost his wife, and three of his daughters (Beaumont). His daughter Shirley only survived the quake because she way away from home when it hit; she escaped with a crushed ankle (Beaumont). In the months following the earthquake Octaveus watched the bodies of his wife and children decay, as he was unable to afford the move the rubble covering their bodies. When Octaveus finally uncovered his wife, dogs had torn the flesh from her skill (Beaumont). The violence of the quake, as it did to many of its victims, made her unrecognizable.

Octaveus' story is one example of the horror Douz left in its wake. Across the diaspora over a million Haitians lost someone on January twelfth (Ulysse 93). But still, there are many stories that recount the brave response of Haitians that day: they pulled survivors from the rubble of their homes, they cleaned the wounds of the injured, and shared what little they could salvage from the wreckage with their community members. Many have described the feats of Haitians with one word: resilience.

As said by Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat in an interview after the quake, “Haitians are known for our resilience, because we've suffered so many natural and political tragedies over the years and have always somehow managed to bounce back” (“Haiti’s People Have Strong Will to Rebuild” n.p). However, there may be a danger to the way resilience has been associated with Haiti. Indeed, Haitians are survivors, and as shown by the 2010 earthquake, have had to endure more than the world can possibly imagine, but at what cost? If Haitians are always expected to be resilient then when does Haiti get to say enough is enough? The essence of Haiti’s turmoil can be seen through the Kreyol phrase Poto Mitan” used to describe Haitian women. Haitian women played an important role in the months that followed Douz. As market women (madansara) worked alongside each other to revitalize Haiti’s economy and provide what they could for their families.

Poto Mitan is Vodun term that names the central pillar that supporting sacred temples and religious ceremonies. The term has been used to describe the importance of Haitian women in society, and the space women occupy as Haiti’s economic and social support. Analogous to women in Haitian society, Haiti is also one of the West’s Poto Mitan. It provides the economic and political leverage needed to support Euro-American nations, as a reservoir for the cheap labor that manufactures goods for the American market. Through its continued encounters with disaster, Haiti embodies the same form of resilience ascribed to the women of its community. However, this image of Haiti, much like the image of its women, feeds into the racist depiction of its labor force as superhuman and constantly available commodities. This depiction disregards the trauma and harm necessary to providing that labor. As one colonialism’s jewels, Haiti is always providing to the West. In labeling Haiti as resilient, and by extension unburdened by

colonialism's weight, the rhetoric of resilience makes it so Haiti cannot receive the aid it deserves in times of need (Lapommeray n.p).

This chapter outlines the world's response to Haiti's 2010 earthquake as an unaddressed disaster. The earthquake should not be read as Haiti's largest disaster as that title belongs to colonialism. Instead, the earthquake should be understood as most Haitians understand it, a catalyst for the chaos Euro-America disguised as relief. Douz was an indescribably catastrophic event, yet it became truly disastrous in the West's use of its destruction to further exploit the Haitian people, thus lengthening the quakes impacts. Haiti deserves a break from the resilience the world has applauded it for, because a true testament of Haitian sovereignty over their land and fate is vulnerability: the space to be freely human.

A Godless Nation: Evangelicalism & Negro Blame

In a deeply religious society such as Haiti, religion is a major explainer of disaster. In modern Haiti Evangelicalism has taken root in a large number of Haitians interpretations of events. This was in large part facilitated by Evangelicalism's rise in media. In the case of Haiti's earthquake, Evangelicals were the first and major interpreters of the disaster. This section outlines the nature of Evangelical interpretations of disaster and the violence resulting from their explanations.

Evangelicalism is a conversion centered sect of Christianity built on fundamentalism. Fundamentalism believes that the bible must be read literally and through such readings can never be wrong (Sadeen et al. n.p). In its rise after Haiti's earthquake, Evangelicalism employed biblical terminology to attack Haiti's indigenous religion, Vodun. In doing so Haitians were not only marked as pagans and heathens, but also made culpable for the earthquake. An example of this is illustrated through the sermons of Pat Robertson.

Robertson is an influential voice in the American Evangelical movement, and conservative American politics (Louis 1). The day after the earthquake Robertson delivered a message to viewers on "The 700 Club", one of the largest Christian broadcasting networks in Amerikkka (Louis 1). Little information was out yet on the epicenter earthquake, its aftermaths, or what aid could be provided. But in a burst in Christian love, Robertson asked his viewers to pray for Haiti:

> "Something happened a long time ago in Haiti and its people might not want to talk about it. They were under the heel of the French. You know Napoleon, or whatever. And they got together and swore a pact to the devil. They said, we will serve you if you'll get us free from the French. True story. And so the devil said, okay its a deal. The island of Hispaniola is one island. It is cut down the middle; on the one side is Haiti and on the other is the Dominican Republic. Dominican Republic is prosperous, healthy, full of resorts, etc. Haiti is in desperate poverty. Same island. They need to have and we need to pray for them a great turning to God and out of this tragedy I'm optimistic something good may come" (Louis 1)

Needless to say, the world was stunned.

The dangers of biblical literalism as well as Christian fundamentalism, is that when utilized as a colonial technology, it erases secular causes for the events it interprets. Christian fundamentalist viewed Haiti's earthquake as a sign of God's displeasure, citing verses such as Proverbs 15:33, Luke 12:2-3, and Revelations 16 (see the box below), as proof of God's divine retributions against Haitians. Soon it didn't matter that Haiti was built over converging fault lines, or that thousands of Haitians had lost their lives, because Christian fundamentalism had explained to the world all it needed to know: Haitians were suffering, and they deserved it.

"The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble" (*Holy Bible*).
—Proverbs 12:33

" Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds,[a] fell on people. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible" (*Holy Bible*).
—Revelations 16: 18-21

"God has never pretended to manage the Earth. Only Christians believe that —that God manages the Earth. God created the laws of nature and set the world in motion—and 'accidents' like this earthquake are out of his control... the dead will be reincarnated, and nature should not be blamed for killing" (Kaste n.p).
—Vodun Priest Max Beauvoir

The devil pact Robertson referred to us Bois Kayman, one of the aforementioned Vodun ceremonies attacked by Protestant missionaries during U.S occupation. Bois Kayman is the spiritual foundation of Haiti, and reminds Haitians of the strength in their Blackness, the wisdom of their ancestors, and the power they can find together in community. However, with the rise of Evangelicalism described in the previous chapter, Bois Kayman and Vodun were refashioned by

Euro-American leaders as tools against Haitians. They positioned both spaces as the cause of Haiti's problems, and so-called "depravity". Each year hundreds of missionaries swarm the streets of Haiti like locusts offering salvation through Evangelicalism, and after the earthquake American missionaries did such to a heightened degree (Louis 13). The Christian radio station, *Inspiration,* alone received 11,000 pledges from callers promising to worship Jesus Christ in exchange for protection (Germain 255). The ignorance expressed by Robertson, and evangelicals like him, have had violent impacts on non-evangelical Haitians impacted by the earthquake. An example of this is the attack on Vodun practitioners in Port-au-Prince a month after the earthquake.

> "People who practice voodoo are living in the shadows...[the] earthquake was a sign to all those who do not accept Jesus Christ in their life" (Germain 256).
> — Florian Ganthier

On February 23 2010, a group of Vodun practitioners in Cité Soleil. With their songs and drumbeats, practitioners created a space for displaced community members to commune with the lost souls of their friends and family. Mid ceremony worshippers were assaulted by a crowd of evangelicals. Evangelical warriors desecrated their Vodun symbols, pissed on their offering, and destroyed their altars. Many of the violators were young Haitians who under the direction of evangelical missionary radios, took it upon themselves to act as "soldiers of god" and prevent Vodun from harming the Evangelical future of Haiti. But of course, this is only an instance of the harm evangelical rhetoric caused. Missionary camps shunned Haitians in need of food, supplies, and resources, for their ties to the island's indigenous religion. Community leaders such as Max Beauvoir, founder of Fédérasyon Nasyonal Vodou Ayisyen, accused American missionaries of leading an anti-Vodun movement, when what was needed at the time was relief (Germain 257).

Fig. 13. A Vodun practitioner walking through the streets of Port-au-Prince six days after the earthquake; Jeroen Oerlemans. A Voodoo Believer Walks Past a Pile of Debris Six Days after an Earthquake Hit the City. A 7.0 Magnitude Earthquake Struck Haiti on 12/01/2010. Early Reports Indicated That More than 100,000 May Have Been Killed and Three Million Affected. 18/1/10. JSTOR, https://jstor.org/stable/community.12140837. Accessed 27 Mar. 2023
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"He made a statement last night said we Haitian have a contract— my parents have a contract with the devil. That's why Haiti get hurt by this catastrophe. I want Pat to go back to history. Haiti, my parents came to Haiti they brought from Africa and spent 300 years of slavery and finally they decided to say enough is enough. They fought and they got their freedom. They set the way for everybody to be free. They did not believe because of the color of their skin they should be the slave of somebody else. If you say you're a man of God and God who believe that another human being should be your slave then my friend you wrong. We did not have no contract with no devil. And because of our hard work, Haiti also change the way people work. We use to have a workforce called free workforce where peoples see you on the street and they see the color of your skin and then they brought you to work for free. That was the slavery system. And because of my parents that's changed today. Haiti played a role in the world but you cannot forget that, you cannot take that away from us. If it is that because of that, you say we have a curse , you say we have a contract with the devil, no my friend" ("Haitians React to Televangelist Pat Robertson's 'Devil Pact' Remarks").
—Miami Haitian-American Hans Mardy, 2010

The tragedy of Evangelicals' dismissal of Vodun is that community members faced more harm at the hands of American missionaries than they ever would have at the hounfourts blamed for Haiti's chaos. The racist commodification and marketing of Haitian children by US missionaries is an example of this abuse. Before the earthquake there were fewer than 100 orphanages in Haiti, yet by 2012 there were 750 (Zabludovsky, "Western Missionaries Oversee Haitian Orphanages Where Children Are Abused and Exploited."). US missionaries mobilized by images of displaced children scoured the streets of Port-au-Prince for children in need. However, most of these children weren't orphans or in danger. In one of the largest scandals, ten American missionaries were arrested for kidnapping thirty-three Haitian children.

Parents who turned their children over missionaries hoping they would be provided resources the state couldn't provide at the time of the earthquake were horrified to learn their children had been herded off without their consent. The American missionaries who took these children did so because their whiteness, bolstered by colonial religiosity, privileged them to do so without fear of consequences. They herded thirty-three children together not because it's what the children's family wanted, but because they believed their role as Christians provided them with the authority to determine the trajectory of these children's lives. The actions of missionaries in this case, echo the actions of missionaries during the age of conquest. Much like Africans were taken from their homes and sold into a life of enslavement in the Americas as a form of salvation, Haitian children were taken from their homes to save them from parents the missionaries viewed as unfit. The demonization of Haitian community members is a flaw of missionary work. Because missionaries have been taught to see Haitians through Evangelicalism glass of anti-Blackness, missionary work is built on the racist notion that it is dangerous for Haitians to take care of themselves. The only regret expressed by the missionaries who

kidnapped the thirty-three children is that they hadn't reached their intended goal of 100 (Hoffman 157).

Fig.14. The halls of Home Hope Orphanage in Port-au-Prince; Karla, Zabludovsky. "UN Peacekeepers Fathered Dozens Of Children In Haiti. The Women They Exploited Are Trying To Get Child Support." Buzzfeed News, 30 Aug. 2021, https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/karlazabludovsky/haiti-earthquake-un-peacekeepers-sexual-abuse.

These crimes against Haitian humanity continue to be unaddressed. Not only did American missionaries discriminate against devout practitioners of Vodun in their time of need, but for those they did take in their fold, abuse, exploitation, and bondage became a part of their daily lives. The work of American missionaries tore apart hundreds of Haitian families in the name of Evangelicalism, and encouraged the erasure of indigenous Haitian support networks such as Vodun which could have aided in community building at the time. Additionally, the world's hyper fixation on Evangelicalism's depiction of Haitian inadequacies has overshadowed the solidarity Haitians showed one another after the earthquake. Haitians as far as the Grand'Anse —a small province twelve to eighteen hours from Port-au-Prince— traveled to capital with rice, yams, coffee, and fresh clothes, for survivors. Community members housed migrant families who had lost their own homes and worked alongside foreign officials to create

better means of distributing resources. Yet, this didn't receive the same coverage by or resource from Haiti's international community as the programs led by foreign missionaries, subsequently blotting counternarratives towards Haiti's need for saviors (Schueller et al. 272-273).

Missionary work is rooted in coloniality, as it uses religious logic to displace colonialism's repercussions on the colonized through the guise of aid. In addition to this, Evangelicalism aids in the commodification of the colonized, and the monetizing of their traumas. For example, in 2017 Church Bible Understanding, an orphanage operated by missionaries from Pennsylvania, reported an income of 4.3 million for just that year (Zabludovsky,"Western Missionaries"). However, the orphanage they sponsored couldn't provide their patrons with a generator, and in 2020 thirteen children were killed from a candle used to light one of the orphanage's dormitories (Zabludovsky, "Western Missionaries"). The work of missionaries, while helpful in some circumstances, worsened the impacts of Haiti's earthquakes by further disenfranchising Haitians in decisions made on the nation's behalf. Whether for its role in blaming Haitians for their misfortune, vilifying Haitians for their Blackness, or exploiting Haitians for commercial gain, it's time Evangelicalism be held accountable for its crimes against Haiti.

> 'Hello my name is Jen. My husband and I have four children. We want to adopt from Haiti. There are three children I've seen on TV who I am in constant prayer for, and who I want to adopt. My heart is deeply burdened, and I want these children" (Hoffman 156).

A Foreigner's Tale: *The Big Truck that Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaste*r

The Big Truck that Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster was released by Jonathan Katz in 2013. The book is Katz attempts to make sense of

Haiti's 2010 earthquake. I was initially hesitant to use Katz for this project. At first glance, Katz seemed like the many other white reporters who swarmed to Haiti during the earthquake: white savoristic, money hungry, naive, and desperate for fame. It was a goal of mine to depict Haitian history throughout my thesis as much as I could through the works of fellow Haitian scholars or Caribbean writers., Even after reading praise Katz earned from many scholars, I've referred to myself, including novelist Myriam Chancy, I remained reluctant to read his book. But I'm happy I did because, to my surprise, Katz has proven himself a true ally of Haiti.

As a prominent journalist formerly with the *Associated Press* Katz has done much to disrupt racist Western depiction of Haiti. His work on Haitian history, disaster capitalism, and modern Haitian struggles, are featured in American news sites like in *AP News, the New Yorker, Washington Post, and the Atlantic*. And thorough his willingness to uplift the voices of Haitian activist, his work has been instrumental in providing a new lens to understand: the rise of cholera in Haiti, how the U.S's occupation of Haiti has weakened the Haitian government, and why Haitians continue to call for transparency as they navigate working with America. Though a foreigner, Katz has a refreshing outlook on the unnatural nature of disaster in Haiti, similar to that shared by members of the Haitian diaspora. *The Big Truck that Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster*, is a tale equally about Katz experiences after the earthquake and his journey to discover Haitian history.

The day of the earthquake Katz was living at AP house, a home owned by the *AP News* service in Pétionville, Port-au-Prince. He moved from the Dominican Republic to Haiti in 2007 as a journalist, but after years of documenting disaster and turmoil across the island, he was ready to leave. Katz book opens with the finding sound of earth her mistook for a passing water truck before describing the horrors of the quake. In the span of a few seconds, he felt the floors move

beneath him—shoving him one way then the other, as he tried to make his way down the second-floor stairs. The only other person in the house with him at the time was his friend Evens Sanon, and together they escaped the ruins that were their home. Katz established himself as an earthquake survivor early in the book not only because it lends credibility to his accounts of the relief efforts but also because it bestows on him an honorary membership in the Haitian community, and therefore privy to the community's opinions. In the weeks after Douz, Katz and Evens traveled through Port-au-Prince to report the state of the nation for AP News. Sometimes they stopped to help pull victims from debris or to interview community members about their experiences (Katz 13-15).

During his travels Katz, was stunned to see the discrimination Haitian faced after the UN's arrival. Areas like Hotel Montana and The Caribbean Supermarket, separate from the schools homes and offices resided by "ordinary Haitians," received aid first. Most Haitians in Port-au-Prince felt unseen by the worlds foreign aid efforts. They desperately held signs in Kreyol, Spanish, French and English all saying the same thing: "we need help", but were still unseen. The misuse of foreign aid on a national level heightened the discrimination Haitians experienced on an individual level (Katz 71-72).

After Douz, Haiti received 5.2 billion dollars in emergency relief, an unprecedented amount of aid. 2.2 billion dollars came from nations like the US, France and Canada, and the rest from private donors. However, very little of the funds went to the Haitian people or the government. Less than one percent of the humanitarian aid donated reached the Haitian government, "as humanitarian relief spending continued to trickle through 2010… in the end at least 93 percent would go back to the UN or NGO's to pay for supplies and personnel, or never leave the donor state at all". To give a sense of how few funds were used seven months after the

quake less than two percent of the rubble was cleared (Katz 203). Migrant camp leaders still haven't received what they were promised at the beginning of the UN's aid efforts. And only 13,000 temporary shelters of the 125,000 promised were built. Donors felt slighted once they saw their money had gone to waste and turned to the Haitian government for answers (Katz 2, 203-204).

The West's narrative of corruption misrepresenting Haitian leadership shifted the copiability for the misuse of funds onto the Haitian government and defined it as corruption. It is true that the Haitian government *ha*s had a history of corruption. This was especially true under Francois Duvalier, "Papa Doc's" , regime.[9] Corruption is the abuse of public authority for private gain (Harrison 674). Often it is the consequence of leadership backed by colonial authorities. This form of private imperialism has always been a part of America's relationship with smaller, less affluent countries subject to America's political and economic power. Because the foreign public is so used to corruption as aspect of Haitian politics, donors failed to realize the Haitian government didn't hold authority over Haiti, and consequently couldn't have stolen their donations. As a structure without true societal power, it wasn't only unlikely that the government stole humanitarian donations through corruption, but it was impossible for them to do so as mere spectators to Haiti's real political authority– the West.

What Katz has captured through the research is not just the question of where Haiti's money went, but how dangerous the West narrative of Haiti's corruption is to Haiti's constituents. An example of this is Katz's interview with Patrick Mercier, a Haitian man who expressed his frustration to Katz over the Haitian government's inability to provide for its people. "Our hats off to Barack Obama", Mercier cheered to Katz, "he is sending his people to take

[9] Francois Duvalier was a brutal dictator in Haiti, empowered by the U.S government during their war against communism. He was a proud Bokor, and negatively skewed the West's perception of Vodun.

control of the country! Haiti should become a part of the United States". While Mercier's frustrations with the Haitian government are understandable, the Haitian state was not completely culpable. The donations Haiti received were intentionally kept from the Haitian government, despite numerous protests from President René Préval. The U.S could provide expend resources to Douz victims because unlike Haiti the U.S's political and economic structure had not been weakened by a series of disasters instigated by other nations. No foreign government had forced them to pay indemnities; there had been no armed occupations, and no one had banned aid to them. The narrative of Haitian corruption, however, has overshadowed the events that explain Haiti's inability to provide for itself—thereby further glorifying the West generous rescue despite the part they played in Haiti's downfall (Katz 81, 203).

Anti-Blackness is foundational to the racial ideology of the West. A major tenant of this world view is that Black leaders are untrustworthy; but in fact, it is the West that is dishonest. The very economic values—i.e., capitalism and free trade—that are at the center of Western political philosophy are the source of corruption in the nations they have colonized. The acquisitiveness that motivated slavery and colonialism is intrinsic to western economic systems that continue to persist today. Thus, the corruption universal to Western systems is mirrored in its colonial subjects. But this thesis argues that Haitians *can* be trusted to manage their own affairs but *aren't* because it is more profitable for the West to manage Haitians' affairs for them. And it becomes even more profitable when this corruption remains unassociated from colonialism that produced.

The Haitian government had access to the donated funds. But still the West blamed Haiti's leaders for the mismanagement of emergency relief funds (Katz 130). Instead of placing the Haitian government in charge of aid funds, the administration of aid fell to the NGOs. For all

purposes this means the NGO's assumed sovereignty over the nation and redesignated the Haitian government as one of their supporting offices. While the absence of funds was one obstruction in Haiti's path towards stability, cholera constituted another crisis Haitians faced.

Ou Pa Wont? Cholera, & Rape under the UN

Latibonit, or the Artibonite river in English, is Haiti's longest and most important river, which provides water for bathing, washing, drinking, and cooking to more than 1.5 million Haitians (Barbanel 389). Once the habitat for mullets, crayfish, and even crocodiles, Latibonit river is a vital water source to the citizens of Hispaniola, connecting communities across Haiti and the Dominican Republic for centuries. After the earthquake Latibonit provided a stable source of water for displaced Haitians near its reach, In October, nine months after the earthquake, Latibonit became known worldwide as the geographic origin of Haiti's next disaster: cholera.

Cholera is a diarrheal infection caused by exposure to the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae* which is most commonly found in food or water contaminated by feces ("Cholera"). The easiest symptom of cholera to diagnose is watery diarrhea, which can appear anywhere between twelve hours and five days after exposure ("Cholera" n.p). Vomiting, leg pains, and dehydration are also common symptoms ("Cholera - Vibrio Cholerae Infection" n.p). Although cholera is easily treatable with fluids that rehydrate, or antibiotics, without proper diagnosis and access to medical attention victims of this illness can die within hours of exposure if left untreated ("Cholera"). There are between 1.3-4.3 million cases of cholera globally each year; killing on average 21-143,000 people ("Cholera - Vibrio"). However, before 2010, there hadn't been cholera in Haiti for nearly 100 years (Katz 222). In fact, a month after the earthquake amid fears of an epidemic

the US insisted that cholera was "absent from the Caribbean…[and] extremely unlikely to occur" (Katz 223).

So how did cholera, an illness unknown to the nation of Haiti grow to kill 9,789 its people—quick answer: The United Nations (Katz 387). In early October of 2010, 1,075 UN peacekeepers from Nepal occupied the Méyé tributary of Latibonit (Pillinger et al. 72). Although cholera is uncommon in the Caribbeans, it is common in Nepal. Nepal is a cholera-endemic country– the disease is always present; and at the time of the Nepali troops arrival their country was experiencing a cholera outbreak in Kathmandu (Katz 225). For some unknown reason do not know, the UN did not find it necessary to test incoming peacekeepers as potential disease carriers, despite growing fears of a potential epidemic in Haiti post-quake. So, it was a recipe for disaster when the bacteria from a foreign source entered the Latibonit river through the cracked sewage canals of the Méyé base.

Fig. 16. A photo of a Port-au-Prince resident crossing a dirty drain on October 29, 2010 ; "Appalling Portraits of Haiti's Cholera Epidemic." *Slate Magazine*, 25 Feb. 2013, https://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/photography/2013/02/haiti_cholera_epidemic_photos_from_the_united_nations_fiasco_photos.html.

> "Another villager tapped Evans on the shoulder. He was slightly older than the others, in a polo shirt, blue shorts, and galoshes specked with what I hoped was mud.
> You and the blan should come with me across the road, he said.
> His name was Jean-Paul Chery. He had lived in Meille his entire life, growing food, mining sand from the river, and for the past six years watching the soldiers come and go. He led us past the concrete house he shared with his wife and five children; his wife held the youngest in her hands on the porch. Up a small hill, past a bony mule and some pigs, the smell returned. Ahead were two shining pools of feces, filling pits dug directly into the ground. 'This is where MINUSTAH leaves their kaka', he said.
> A truck would come every few weeks from a Haitian company called SANCO, Chery said– the contractor that Pugliese, the UN flak, had referred to. The truck would go into the base, suck out the septic, and then drive across the street, and dump waste into the pools by Chery's house. When it rained the pools overflowed. Sometimes they ran down the hill into the river. Sometimes they flowed the other way toward Chery's house, and the smell would get so bad the family couldn't sleep" (Katz 238- 239).
> –Jonathan Katz's firsthand account of the UN's Méyé base

Within days people near the base fell ill. Children and adults alike described a "low hard, pain" in their guts. These cramps signaled the onset of diarrhea and regurgitation, the first symptoms of cholera (Katz 217). By November Haiti had a cholera full-scale epidemic, and the death toll was more than a thousand (Katz 239). Then in July 2011, Haiti broke the world's record with its number of cholera cases. The number of patients exceeded the combined instances of infections for the rest of the world. There was one new infection per minute. (Pillinger et al. 72). The cholera outbreak had a catastrophic impact on Haiti's already strained economy. Local farmers lost revenue to better trusted imported products. Fishermen halted

business from fear of catching an illness. And bodies continued to pile up across the nation (Katz 236).

There are four factors that contributed to the spread of cholera in Haiti:

1. The UN failed to test their troops for infectious diseases, thereby allowing a strain of *Vibrio cholerae* to travel from Nepal to Haiti unknown by its carriers.
2. The improper maintenance of sanitation and waste removal on UN bases allowed raw sewage to pollute Latibonit.
3. The UN's refusal to accept accountability over the matter, delayed the arrival of necessary resources.
4. The complete disregard for Black life, and therefore Haitian life, by the UN normalized death across the island.

Haitians were dying by the thousands. Families already without homes watched in terror as children fell ill, and relatives left clinics in plastic body bags. Despite first-hand accounts of Méyé villagers exposed to pollution, contamination, and waste caused by the leak and articles by *AP news* on broken pipes and faulty sewage systems, the UN remained determined to avoid copiability for its part in the outbreak. They prioritized their image over the lives of the Haitian people they were sent to help. Outraged, Haitians surrounded the Nepalese base in protest as crowds chanted " Vle pa vle, MINUSTAH fok ale!", like it or not MINUSTAH must go, and President Préval turned to the international community for answers. But still, no one listened (Katz, 233,240). After nearly two decades of occupation, the UN ruled over Haiti as its de facto government. *They* decided what policies to make, *they* decided what aid to distribute, *they* defined what problems the Haitian people faced. It didn't matter if Haiti knew the truth about the

disaster the UN had caused, for so long as the UN presided over Haiti, the UN would decide when, how and what justice they would dispense .

Fig.17. Haitian protesters surrounding a UN truck during a protest in Port-au-Prince on June 28, 2011. Protestors demanded justice from MINUSTAH, after a study revealed the cholera found in Haiti matched strains from Nepal; "Appalling Portraits of Haiti's Cholera Epidemic." *Slate Magazine*, 25 Feb. 2013, https://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/photography/2013/02/haiti_cholera_epidemic_photos_from_the_united_nations_fiasco_photos.html.

> "[t]here is not single evidence that they are responsible for this epidemic. It is a rumor... that has spread out in Haiti... We have made a number of tests and all the tests we have done are completely negative. There is not single evidence that this contingent has brought cholera to Haiti- not at all" (Pillinger et al 72).
> ---Alain Le Roy, Under Secretary- General for Peacekeeping Operations, 2010

Eventually the UN acquiesced to investigation calls, and released a series of documents in May 2011 that confirmed a match between the bacteria causing the cholera outbreak at the Latibonit UN base and strains of cholera prominent in Nepal (Katz 241). The report confirmed a direct physical connection between Latibonit's peacekeepers and Haiti's epidemic but avoided attributing responsibility to the UN for the crisis. In fact, it did the exact opposite. In a lengthy

statement, the UN subtly blamed the epidemic on the Haitian people's reliance on Latibonite in their daily lives:

> explosive spread [of the disease was due to several factors, including the widespread use of the river water for washing, bathing, drinking, and recreation; regular exposure to agricultural works to irrigation from the Artibonite River Delta,; the salinity gradient of the Arbornite River Delta, which provided optimal environmental conditions for rapid, proliferation, of *Vibrio cholerae,* the lack of immunity of the Haitian population to cholera; the poor water and sanitation conditions in Haiti... These deficiencies, coupled with conducive environmental and epidemiological conditions, allowed the spread of Vibrio cholerae organisms in the environment, from which a large number of people became infected (Pillinger et al. 72).

In one lengthy paragraph the UN completely retold the story of how cholera became an epidemic in Haiti, focusing on the conditions that led to its spread rather than the negligence that allowed cholera to reach the island in the first place. This doesn't come as a surprise. Just a few months prior at press conference held by the Pan American Health Organization, policy makers around the world marveled at Haiti's relatively cholera free history, questioning "how despite 'the appalling conditions of the people in the capital' had there not already been a cholera outbreak in Haiti before?" (Katz 224). Just as Haitians hadn't caused the earthquake neither did they bring the cholera epidemic into their communities. But public discourse blamed Haitians. The UN's 2011 statement effectively made clear to the world that the UN had no intention of undoing what their peacekeepers had done, Haiti was on its own.

On December 1 2016, the UN made another attempt at an apology: "[we] simply did not do enough with regard to the cholera outbreak and its spread in Haiti" (UN, 2016). Like their 2011 report, the statement was careful not to cite the UN as the cause of Haiti's cholera outbreak, which after years of unresolved legal disputes felt like a slap in the face. The UN *did* link cholera to the poor health and hygiene practice of the of Haitian population; thus, this disease became associated with other deficiencies such as deforestation, governmental instability, and social inequality that had been habitually defined as Haitian failure to evolve. For years Haitian activists have filed lawsuits in U.S courts against the UN in attempts to hold them accountable for the lives the cholera outbreak took, but international laws have granted the UN immunity (Pillinger et al. 70). Without a formal apology Haiti cannot seek reparations for the harm caused by the UN's actions, leaving Haitians with no choice to live under international silence.

Cholera was not the only disaster that the UN imported to Haiti. The sexual exploitation, sex trafficking and rape that always accompany occupations by foreign troops infested the country. Sexual exploitation of local people is not unique to Haiti. In fact, since 2007, there have been more than a dozen countries have brought charges alleging 1,143 crimes of sexual misconduct against peacekeepers. In Haiti alone there have been 120 reports of sexual abuse. This must be but a small percentage of the harm actually done by peacekeepers on the island, for the disenfranchised bring so few cases against their more powerful attackers. Sixteen-year-old Rose Mina Joseph is but one example of sexual coercion. Julio Cesar Possee, a thirty-five-year-old peacekeeper, pressured her to have sex with him.: "I didn't have an understanding of what I was doing," she testified. By the time Joseph gave birth to their son Anderson, Posse had returned home, leaving both of them behind with no provisions for support. (Zabludovsky, "UN Peacekeepers Fathered Dozens Of Children In Haiti. The Women They Exploited Are Trying To

Get Child Support." n.p). In a 2017 survey of 2,500 Haitians by researchers Susan Bartels and Sabine Lee found that over 265 respondents identified a UN peacekeeper as the father of their child, or that they knew a child born from an abusive sexual experience between a local and a peacekeeper station nearby (Zabludovsky, "UN Peacekeepers").

In 2019 Bartels and Sabine published their works in *The Conversation*, an academic outlet. They had gathered-the stories of 265 children fathered by UN workers. Their report exposed cases of abandonment, abject poverty, and parental neglect. In a nation stunted by constant disasters, young parents struggle to support the children they were coerced into conceiving. The UN has done little to ensure child support for these victims. With few options and resources, some parents have had to re-enter Haiti's underground UN sexual economy and to work without the assurance of benefits offered in a formalized sex industry (Bartels and (Bartels and Lee n.p).

> "He left her in misery because when he used to have sex with her it was for little money, now his term reaches its end, he goes and leaves her in misery, and then now she has to redo the same process so she can provide meals to her child, can't you understand" (Bartels and Lee).
> –Man from Port-au-Prince

Prior to the 2010 quake, UN peacekeepers had been found guilty of raping, exploiting, and trafficking children as well. In 2013 nine Haitian children came forward to describe the sexual abuse they experienced at the hands of at least 134 Sri Lankan peacekeepers between 2004 and 2007 (Dodds n.p). When interviewed about their traumatic experience, one boy aged 15 described being forced to sleep with 100 peacekeepers in three years, averaging around 4 a day (Dodds). Sexual violence is an active part of UN peacekeeping as is the UN's refusal to provide reparations for their victims. It wasn't until 2015 that the UN began requiring

peacekeeper's home countries to certify that deployed military personnel had no previous history of human rights violations, and even then, crimes have continued to go on relatively unchecked (Zabludovsky, "UN Peacekeepers").

> "Well if it wasn't for deputy X, there really would have been a lot of rape by the MINUSTAH around here. He had to kick them out because they started to commit homosexual acts on men" (Bartels et al. 10).
> — Married male, aged 25-34 describing Uruguayan MINUSTAH soldiers in Port Salut

As described in "Chapter 2", France's enslavement of Saint Domingue's Black population marked Black women as sources of labor. Sex was a part of this labor. Black women's bodies were therefore a sexual commodity in Saint Domingue with economic value. While the same can be said to some extent for men under enslavement, queerness disrupts colonial understandings of normativity as defined by the dominant religion of the settlers. As such, Black women experienced more settler-male sexual violence than men, and sexual violence became a normalized part their enslavement.

Bartels, King, and Lee argue in their article " 'When it's a Girl, They Have a Chance to Have Sex with Them. When its a Boy They Have Been Known to Rape Them'", the seriousness of heterosexual sex crimes committed against Haitian women have been minimized compared to the same-sex sex crimes committed against Haitian men because colonial structures deny Black women the visibility required to seek justice. SEA perpetrated against men/boys are twice as likely to be categorized as rape (93.1%) in comparison to SEA against women/girls (46.6%). A modern consequence of the sexual violence Black women faced is the "sexing" of sexual violence to erase their experience. Under coloniality Black women are sexual commodities, without intellect agency or desire. As such colonialism made it nearly impossible for Black

women to seek justice for sexual violence since the violence, they experience is a customary part of settler fulfillment. Subsequently, terms such as “rape”, “assault”, and “violence” that mark sexual violence do not apply to Black in colonially influenced nations, as these terms are implied to exclude Black women. Therefore the “sexing” of sexual violence by the West, is an extension of ungendering. Both terms deny that Black women are people, and as such they cannot experience a violation of autonomy as people do. Terms such as sexual violence can be used to seek justice for men, or white women, but rarely ever Black women.

This is especially true once money becomes involved. UN officers used the economic instability Douz created to sexually exploit Haitian women and children. Peacekeepers preyed on women and young girls seeking food and shelter and offered women money in exchange for sex. But Haitians were already entitled to the resources their sexual exploitation provided for them, as it was the UN’s role to provide shelter and resources to all in need. In the most extreme cases MINUSTAH staff bought the virginity of schoolgirls for less than twenty dollars .The shame for these exploitive acts falls fully on the victims for “selling their bodies,” even though these children were underage and, therefore, incapable of giving their consent to a sexual act . “Weak minds” is a term used society used to describe victims forced into the UN’s undercover sexual economy. As usual, the perpetrators escape any denunciation for their guilt (Bartels et al. 8-10).

> “Sometimes some of the guys do not have a wife. They can take two teenage girls and they take advantage of them, often the ones with weak minds” (Bartels et al. 8).
> –Single man, aged 25-34, describing Brazilian UN soldiers in Cité Soleil

Though, coloniality warps definitions of sexual violence through the heteropatriarchy, this is not the same as allotting male victims of patriarchy with avenues for justice. Given the

shame surrounding male sexual assault in Haiti, few men come forward to report their experiences, making them "invisible victims" too (Bartels et al. 3). Many Haitians view homosexuality as a sin, my parents included, because of the power of Christian rhetoric commonly has across the island. Victim blaming is also common for men who do come forward. Young assaulted by UN men "no longer have an existence in society", this turns silence into a double-edged sword for many victims (Bartels et al. 10).

> "Children who were victims of sexual violence can't really be part of the society anymore. Considering a boy 14, 15, 16, years old sexually assaulted by a MINUSTAH agent who caught that on camera and published that on television, that boy no longer has an existence in society" (Bartels et al. 10).
> —Single male, aged 25-23 describing Nepalese MINUSTAH soldiers in Saint Marc

The colonial disaster presents itself as a solution to physical disasters amplified by its previous interferences, and in the process always creates more chaos. In the case of sexual violence and cholera, the UN peacekeepers presented themselves to the Haitian people as help in a time of need. But the result of their intervention was exploitation, abuse, violence, and even more forms of chaos. This isn't to say there weren't some dedicated peacekeepers who came to Haiti in a genuine attempt to provide aid or that they did not provide some aid. But that the institutions in which the aid is provided were constructed with little thought towards the people they were designed to "help". Cholera victims were blamed for using Latibonit, victims raped and sexual exploited by UN officers were blamed for the existence of the world's violent sexual economy, but what was the UN held responsible for?

What We Can Learn From *What Storm What Thunder*

In 2010 Motion Magazine published “Poems of Solidarity for Haiti’, a collection of short poems written by Haitians across the diaspora. Pulled together in large part by the efforts of Alice Lovelace, “Poems of Solidarity for Haiti " places the Haitian community at the heart of disaster relief, lyrically describing Haiti as a place of freedom, joy, and constant growth made possible by our love for each other. My favorite poem from this collection is “Okay to Cry”, written by Anthonia Lameutu Adams:

> Don't be a fool/ Cry /Woman cry /When they express from the heart /Baby’s cry in the open /Yet men cry in the dark /Don’t wanna talk about it /But can’t over it/Act as if /Tears are sin
>
> Cry/From a broken heart/A broken home/Broken body and soul/ Cry /From a loved one lost /Or on that returned /Or you can't pay your bill’s cost /No matter how much money you’ve earned
>
> Cry on the day you say/I, do/ Yet comfort those who/Can't find their own love /Cry from fear
>
> Cry from pain /From memories /That will always be /So plain to see in back of your mind /Cry /For the ups and /For the downs /Or when your family comes around /Cry /Because you’re proud /Cry Because you’re sick /Out loud /Or silently where you sit /Men shouldn’t be afraid /To cry in the open /Jesus wasn't /Jesus wept /He cried for the /World to see /And sacrificed for you and me /God wept at our /Evil /And gave us /A second /Chance
>
> Never be ashamed to cry /As long as you live on/Because once you stand and dry your eyes/ You'll learn crying makes you strong (Lovelace 31-32).

Although I disagree with Adams' description of Jesus, "our evil", and the Christian God's merciful second chance, As a writer I love Adams' poem because it offers vulnerability and community as the key to loving ourselves and rebuilding Haiti. Stanza after Stanza, Adams centers the power of tears in our nation's healing, reminding her audience that what has made Haiti strong in the past is our willingness to share our pains with each other to forge a new path.

One of the most dangerous aspects of disaster is that it weakens our relationship with each other. It's easy to feel alone as death surrounds you. It's easy to feel abandoned as all that you know becomes erased in a flash. It's easy to feel powerless in the face of doom. But liberation and joy are born from efforts taking place *inside* our community, with members from the past, present and future working together towards a common goal. On the day of the earthquake Haiti was on its own. And rather than wait for the world to come to our side, lives were saved by community members who: pulled their neighbors from the rubble of their homes, took stock from what they had left to feed each other, moved grieving parents, and led rescue missions across the nation. The answer to Haiti's disasters lies in the phrase l'union fait la force, unity is strength, despite the colonial rhetoric that tells us otherwise. As shown by Haitian Canadian writer Myriam Chancy in *What Storm what Thunder* there is much the world can learn from how fiercely Haitians love one another.

What Storm what Thunder was released in 2021 as a tapestry novel, charting the lives of ten characters impacted by Douz. In many ways *What Storm what Thunder* does seemingly effortlessly what I'm still trying to do in this thesis: it connects disaster with colonialism, highlights Haiti's triumphs and losses, provides a critical lens for appendages of neo-colonialism through its analysis of religion and foreign aid, and most importantly, centers community in Haiti's healing. The story begins in the center of Haitian society– the marketplace– before

transitioning to scenes of Haiti's countryside, the lush confines of Port-au-Prince's Hotel De Montagne Noir, a small room in Boston tethered to the island by the experiences of a recent immigrant, and tents that would become homes for displaced families. Weaving between stories of grief, longing, and tradition, Chancy locates Haiti's healing in the capacity of the Haitian people to band together in times of need. Vodun is Chancy's clearest example of this.

Vodun has always been a site of power in Haiti. As a sacred symbol system, it existed far before Haiti, Saint Domingue, or the colonial disaster was formed. Vodun at its simplest is the practice of memory— learning from our ancestors to heal one another, build communion with one another, and imagine a world where the living and the dead are fluid parts of one ever growing community. Although many understandings of Vodun have been perverted by evangelicalism, colonial crusaders, and its misuse by Duvalier, Vodun has time and time again gifted Haitians with pathways towards freedom. It teaches us that we are never truly alone. *What Storm what Thunder* begins with this understanding of Vodun, by teaching its readers how to call Papa Legba with this incantation: "[Atibo Legba, open the door for me, Papa Legba, open the door for me, Open the door so that I can enter, So that I can return] (Chancy 2). Like her previous novel *Spirit of Haiti,* Chancy embeds Vodun carefully in the text through characters' experiences with the divine, and its ability to elasticize our understanding of community. This is exemplified through Chancy's connection between Vodun and queerness.

There are few stories with characters like me: queer, Black, living and loved and there are even less stories with queer Haitians. Although same-sex relationships aren't officially criminalized in Haiti like other Caribbean nations, homophobia has a long history in understanding catastrophe in Haiti. In Haiti, masisi's, a term for queer members like me, exist in what Judith Butler described as the "outer", a space of invisibility marginal to the public realm's

notions of community, and national identity. As an outer part of Haitian society queer Haitians power Haitian society, engaging in Haiti's sexual economy, Vodun, and community building. And yet, as a byproduct of the "outer" space occupied" queer Haitians are denied economic or political visibility, as their identities have been erased from Haiti's national identity and therefore "inner" community. To this degree, to be queer and part of the Haitian diaspora is to exist in a precarious state, with one's place in society always in jeopardy (Migraine-George 8, 10-11)

> "I heard the word *masisi* for the first time when I was 14. I was sitting with my dad, the TV was turned on to channel 5 news, the shades slightly drawn, and sunlight that managed to enter the room created shadows along the wall. There were two men on the screen, their bodies were curved together; his body entwining with his and his lips locking with his. It was poetry. I watched in awe until I heard my dad groan, "Samyél you see this, how they let *masisis* marry now?" I stared at him, letting this new word glide around my tongue, *m a-si-si*. Unable to find memories of this word I nodded along, the poetry left behind with the news" (Jean-Francois n.p).

For generations Evangelical and Catholic institutions have used same-sex loving Haitians as one of their explanations for catastrophes in Haiti. An example of this is the AIDS epidemic. In 1981 the CDC published the 4Hs study, falsely identifying "Haitians, hemophiliacs, heroin addicts, and homosexuals". Outraged by the West racist depiction of Haiti, Christian communities turned to queer Haitians as the source of Haiti's international discrimination. Even after a 1989 report by the Panos Caribbean Institute sourced the rise of AIDS in Haiti to North American tourists, queer Haitians were still blamed for the creation of AIDS, and Haiti's international discrimination by many. Repeating history, the Catholic Church

immediately blamed queer Haitians for the 2010 earthquake, calling them “the devil's messenger” and cause for God’s disdain (Migraine-George 11-12).

The vulnerability of queer Haitians is an example of the structural violence created by colonialism's displacement of its own accountability onto its victims. The colonial disaster requires living mediums to blame for its consequences, and through Christian rhetoric queer Haitians have become one of these mediums. As one of colonialism scapegoats, queer Haitians cannot exist safely so long as colonial structures such as Christianity continue to redefine Haitian identity. Nor can any institution that disrupts the knowledge colonialism has shared (i.e. Vodun). Without safety, rights, or access to shared Haitian sovereignty, in the face of disaster queer Haitians are pushed outside the field of disaster relief, and into a space of culpability. For many same-sex loving Haitians, even with the rise of activist groups like Kouraj and SEROIE, silence has been one of the only ways to escape abuse and persecution (Migraine-George 21). This is especially true as Vodun, Haiti’s traditional space for acceptance and expression, has lost its centrality in Haiti. “What Storm What Thunder " embodies the radical work of queer Haitian activists to center queerness as a rich part of Haitian national diversity through Dieudonne and Sonia’s.

Dieudonne and Sonia both work at the Hotel De Montagne Noir and are bound together in their shared experience as “M[‘s]” in Haiti (Chancy 45).[10] Mindful of hetero-patriarchal violence in Haiti, Dieudonne and Sonia create community for themselves at the Hotel De Montagne Noir; which later materializes through Dieudonne protecting Sonia as she engages in sex work. Although the novel doesn’t explicitly show Dieudonne or Sonia engaging in same-sex

[10] “M” is an abbreviation for masisi. Through directly translated as “sissy” or “faggot”, masisi is a term generally used to describe queer Haitians. “M” can also represent madivin, the Kreyol term for queer Haitian women.

relationships, their queerness is an unspoken specter in the story and forces readers to questions: what the earthquake will mean for Dieudonne and Sonia, how can sex work be a liberatory space for Haitians erased from larger society, and if the two will ever be accepted for who they are. Rather than kill the existence of Haitian queerness in her text, Chancy saves these characters from disaster through the warnings of Vodun spirit, Baron Samedi.

The day of the earthquake Dieudonne and Sonia are visited by a caned man. At first unsure of his presence, the two soon realize the man is Baron Samedi, lwa of death. Throughout the day the man appears and disappears, each time as if telling them "to stay on [their] guard, to be vigilant, [and] ready to flee" (Chancy 37). Left uneased by this experience, Sonia and Dieudonne decide to leave the hotel as soon as they can, and miraculously escape the impacts of Douz by seconds. The return of Baron Samedi to the land of the living unprovoked, is an extension of community within the text. Despite how invisible Sonia and Dieudonne have been made by shame attached to their queerness, in their time of need Sonia and Dieudonne are both saved by the wisdom of their ancestors thus cementing their place as community members in Haiti. In having Vodun be the space that saves Sonia and Dieudonne from death, Chancy reestablishes the protective power of tradition while simultaneously prompting her readers to question the validity of Sonia and Dieudonne's persecution in Haiti. If the gods accept them then why can't we?

Once elasticizing our understanding of community to embody the experiences of marginalized Haitians, Chancy moves Vodun into the process of grief. Sara's character is a mother trapped in mourning, unable to escape memories of the children Douz claimed. Lost in her memories of once was, Sara enters a space of in betweenness, guided slowly out of her grief by the spirits of her children. At first Sara is unsure of what's happening to her, each night

feeling a tugging invisible thing creeping towards, “tickl[ing] at her feet ". As her narration continues Sara finds answers in her past, remembering the Vodun traditions of her grandmother's communities before deciding to summon her children on her own with “bowls, water, salt”. Although members of her camp believe she’s gone insane, Sara begins to find her footing in life again, reconnecting with the spirits of her lost children through the “small translucent hands [materializing and] dipping into the bowls" of water she left for them (Chancy 29, 31).

Though Sara is also aided by a concerned living community, connecting with her ancestors and their traditions is what allows Sara to eventually move forward and accept the loss of her children. Sara’s journey of grief is a powerful testament to the power of Vodun in the Haitian community. When stripped of everything but her memories, Vodun is what allows Sara to move forward and heal, her experiences with grief reflective of Vodun’s ability to heal across the Haitian diaspora. The dead are as equal a part of our communities as the living, and Vodun reminds us to turn to them when the living have yet to imagine answers. Ma Lou, the lakou’s elderly Madan Sarah and matriarch, is another character healed by her experiences with the spirits. When the novel begins Ma Lou is a devout Christian, hesitant to engage in Vodun practices like her late husband. Yet with each new loss Ma Lou finds herself losing faith in Christianity, questioning God's ability to truly make an impact on this earth. Disillusioned by the Christian God, Ma Lou then turns to the gods of her husband and tells her granddaughter Anne

> “listen…we are particles in motion. This is why the gods can descend into us. My mother’s gods. Lou’s gods. The ancestral gods. Our gods. We must find our way back to them. No more rosaries and earthenware statues, no more churches that fall down around our ears… *fòm’ale*. I have to fly” (Chancy 299).

Accepting her role with the gods, Ma Lou guides the women in her community to fly with her. The novel ends with Ma Lou taking the excavated bones of her husband with her to Saint Marc for a proper burial on her mother's land, alongside Sara, Anne, a young girl named Taffia carrying her son conceived in rape, and Taffia's older sister Sonia. "They are in need of ceremony, something all their own, away from the city and its repeating cycles of wounding", Ma Lou tells her granddaughter and together they take the other women to wash their pains, to wash their bones, and be reborn in purity of the lwa's water (Chancy 303). Chancy ends the novel with Ma Lou turning to the other women in peace, finally ready to weep for those who were lost.

I love this scene for so many reasons: the intimacy shared between all five women, Chancy's descriptions of water and healing, the vulnerability held by Ma Lou, but most of all the space it creates for the dead in our healing– Haiti's healing. What can be learned from "What Storm What Thunder," is that our traditions lay the foundations for community. Our traditions tether us to the land we walk on, the water we look towards, and the bones holding our body with flesh. The closure experienced by Ma Lou, Taffia, Anne, Sonia, and Sara didn't come from peacekeepers sent with aid, or pastors traveling from afar, it came from within themselves and the memories our ancestors have connected to our flesh. Vodun queers and elasticizes Haitian society. Like the characters Chancy narrates her text through, Vodun reminds us Haiti is touched by spirits. These spirits guide us, create space for us, and challenge us to see each other as the eternal siblings we really are. Additionally, in ending the text with Vodun, Chancy provides Ma Lou, and thereby Haiti a space to be vulnerable, a hallmark of true healing. In short, "What Storm What Thunder ", reminds Haitians our communities already hold the answers to our disasters; it's now up to the world to let us put them to practice.

Excerpt: <u>What Storm What Thunder</u>

We three open it together, let the water fall over the blanched bones, an anointing. Take the pain away, Wede. Take the pain, Wede. Wede. Take us. I feel the bones cleansed of every past sorrow as the water courses over them, over me through us. I see tears come down Sara's cheeks as she says goodbye to her own. We close the bag. The bones must go home to the land. We sit beneath the waterfall in silence, watch Taffia carry the baby in the falls, where Sonia, stripped to her waist, anoints the baby and blesses him in the name of Wede, their mother watching from the side of the waterfall, hands clasped. For the first time in two years, I smile as my heart empties and receives grace. Sara looks at us with more clarity in her eyes than I have seen since the day of the fire. Mesi, Wede. Mesi Damballah. My mother's gods. Thank you (Chancey, 305).

Conclusion

Colonialism legitimatizes itself through its rhetorical use of modernity, which "maps the discursive terrain for colonial domination and expansion by separating the world into two: civilized & uncivilized people, developed and underdeveloped nations, first second and third worlds, contemporary/ modern versus traditional custom" (Shepard 36). Not only has colonialism's use of modernity rendered its colonial advances inevitable, but in its redefining of the modern colonialism has knotted its conception of "the modern" with the colonized perception of time. In this rhetoric time is perceived linearly; "lauded as development and progress" (Shepard 36). But modernity and time are not synonymous to one another, in fact I argue that times moves without a clear order.

African author and Nobel Prize winner Wole Soyinka describes diasporic time as cyclical (Topper 53). Time is marked by repetitions—the past present and future weave into one another in their composition of one's lived reality. A limitation of Soyinka's description of time though is that its only traces the movement of time in one place. If time is indeed cyclical, then events are bound to repeat themselves without potential shifts for what reality can be. "Spiral" is thereby a term I offer from the works of scholar Kaiama L. Glover to modify Soyinka's definition of diasporic time. In Haiti Unbound: A Spiralist Challenge to the Postcolonial Canon, Glover describes spirals, and their body of work spiralism, as a revolutionary writing style that aims to demystify traditional literary norms and move into recentralized post-colonial realities. Spiralism roots itself in Haiti's indigenous religions, and orients reality in Vodun movements "back and forth in time and space" (Glover ix). Though similar to Soyinka's cyclical notion of diasporic time spiralism differs in its ability to "collapse inward and release outward", cycloning logic time and perception in a vortex of what's passed, what is happening, and will be made true,

all at once (Glover ix). Time *is* marked by repetitions, but time is also capable of new patterns—new planes—as it spins around itself in constant motion. In this regard time as understood by the diaspora rejects colonialism's association between time and modernity as the diaspora centers reality in its coiling of the past present and future events.

Traditional religion embodies the spiraling of time. Colonialism defines tradition as backwards, a thing of the past. However, it promises their practitioners a means of freedom in the use of tradition to unlock their authentic selves; the very selves needed to imagine liberation. For example, during the Haitian Revolution Vodun reminded enslaved Africans of their power and humanity with traditional ceremonies rooted in the past yet adopted in their present. In this sense Vodun and traditional religions are an essential path to an afro-futurist imagination of the world freed from colonialism's shackles. This thesis turns to tradition not because it was created before the colonial disaster but because in its flexible facilitation of time, traditional religions offer solutions to current oppressions with ever going threads from the past and yet understood future.

This thesis takes seriously the role of religion as a motivator throughout every stage of Haitian history. And by such is an important body of work that adds to the ongoing discourse of how to understand disaster in Haiti. Though this thesis does not (nor cannot) offer a clear solution to the colonial disaster, it outlines how Haitians may already possess the tools for dismantling the master's house. The community traditional religion orchestrates is the greatest asset Haitians have in their interactions with disaster. Haiti models Black sovereignty to its sisters in the diaspora as the first Black republic formed in resistance to the West. In contextualizing the state of Haiti today under the lens of the colonial disaster, this thesis not only imagines liberation for Haiti, but also for all those who see Haiti as a beacon of hope.

Epilogue

Dear Reader,

I started this project from fragments I've heard of the same story. Months after I was born my uncle, a bokor, told my father that my mother, my older sister, and I would die from a mysterious illness. My parents prayed and prayed to God for help.

My father was training to be a preacher, and my mother was raised evangelical. Though they trusted my uncle, to them he was still a bokor, and they refused to place their lives in the hands of a magician. A few weeks after they saw my uncle, my mother fell ill. No one could say what was happening to her. Her body felt weak, her skin burned like fire, and there were days she could barely speak. Desperate, my parents begged my uncle for his help, and from a moment that brought them brief relief was born their greatest shame.

The illness my uncle abated required constant healing for my mother and made his halls a second home to me. I remember trips to my uncle's house in Immokalee every other weekend, locked in my older cousin's room as we heard chants bleeding from the hall. I remember nights spent laying in the back of our silver Toyota as my parents marched their way into foreign bogs after telling us to lock the door and stay quiet; I remember jumping over fires with my sisters, drinking the bitterest of teas, the smell of sour orange tied around my waist, and the whiffs of tobacco mixed with Florida water before set ablaze.

And then one day it all stopped: there were no bottles, or candles, or even the rich smell of tobacco in the air... only the sound of levanjil.

When I finally asked my mother why we never saw my uncle anymore she told me her Pastor and Radio Shekinah had helped her see my uncle for she what she thought he really was: a demon who had tricked her and broken her family. And that with God's guidance she would undo the curses my uncle placed on our family, after seeking forgiveness for the sins she had done. I spent hours with my uncle, healed by tea leaves, ointments, and herbs. I'd seen him more than our family doctor. I couldn't see how if my uncle had saved our lives then how bad could he be?

The more religious my mother became the less it felt like I understood her. Everything that went wrong in our lives had a Christian explanation: my parent's separation, the poverty we faced, my sexuality, could all be traced by my mother to the sins of her past, and her journey to re-earn God's trust.

The first drafts of this thesis began with these memories. I wanted to find a space to un-work my parents' experiences with religion, and religions place in Haitian culture, tying together Christian Capitalism and Evangelicalism in the process. I worked with Professor Houchins my sophomore year at Bates on an independent study we titled Afro-Diasporic religions, to learn more about Vodun. In my Junior year I worked with Professor Marcus Bruce to learn more about liberation theology. And the summer entering my senior year I prepared to write a thesis on Vodun and Evangelicalism, reflecting on evangelicalism as a poison in the diaspora. But as I researched, I quickly realized that religion was only a part of the problems existing in Haiti; class, racialization, governmental regimes,

foreign aid, and occupation, also played a pivotal role in Haitian culture. And unless I addressed them all simultaneously, my religious analysis wouldn't be enough.

The first word that came to mind as I was searching for a way to connect these discourses was disaster. I understood disaster as the irreversible destruction of life, natural order, and community. And although religion plays a vital role in many lives, in my own it felt like a disaster. From there I wanted to expand my definition of disaster to include not only religion, but also occupation, slavery, and other technologies of colonialism.

As mentioned in my prologue, this project is incomplete. Writing and organizing this thesis was a learning exercise I underestimated. While I wrote I had to reeducate myself on the History of Haiti, to decide what events could best illustrate the disaster of coloniality, which took more time than I expected. In reflecting on the incompleteness of this thesis I was directed to time and colonialism rhetorical use of modernity. Time doesn't function linearly, its spirals. It moves in constant motion in no clear direction; not forwards or backwards but everywhere all at once. And from there I was able to conclude that a part of unworking the colonialism web is to unwork all its structures at once– past present and future. Though this isn't a solution to the colonial disaster, reimagining time helped me stop this draft of my project in Afro-futurism.

Afro-futurism imagines a world free of racial domination, anti-Blackness, and settler supremacy. If this thesis can offer anything, I hope it places Haiti's future in afro-futurism and highlights the continued presence of colonialism in the world.

Thank you.

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