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Nine “peace-making” missions were undertaken by the United Nations in Haiti between 1993 and 2019. Eight series of commemorative medals were produced and issued to the soldiers who partook in these missions. These medals, which commonly circulate in the online collector’s market as both originals and copies, were the basis for the designs of the screenprints which the artist commissioned Josias to create.

The vertical color-bands of these medals are often described by UN officials as carrying significant metaphorical importance to the historical and socioeconomic relations between territories and sometimes change across years and issuances. The color Royal Blue, for example, is said to “symbolize the ocean surrounding the island of Hispaniola.” Red is “an official color of Canada as appointed by King George V in 1921.” White “symbolizes the promise of peace for the Haitian people.” And so on.

- Bennett Smith

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By

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0A 1

The Haitian Revolution, largely recognized as the historical epoch which showed the world at large the extents of the potential for a dismantling of the violence enacted upon it by oppressive, colonial regimes, has long been canonized for its role in contributing to the influence of revolutionary struggles of nations of the Black Atlantic and beyond. Countless authors and creative practitioners of all factions—from the heart of its own mountains to the furthest earthly corners from its gates—have made attempts at tackling myriad curiosities of Haiti's highly specific historical, cultural, social, and political dimensions.

The America from where and when this text was produced, for example, is wholly intertwined with Haiti insofar as the two sites have been characterized by the other to some degree, whether in academia, popular culture, or even in what we might call "everyday knowledge," the biases and assumptions which seem to appear in the psyche without origin. Further, the Haitian slave revolt served as an inspiration for the enslaved in the American South as they fought for their own emancipation and, later, the capacity of the Haitian people—as it relates to their collective meticulous orchestration—drove out the occupational American forces from the island. As the history and future of a new America were being penned into a carefully curated existence, so was the time of Haiti, sculpting itself into a rhizomatic network of ink-based speculations on how the yesterdays of the young nation were to be cataloged and archived. The Haitian archive, in the Western sense, can be understood as fragmented and fraught with perceived inconsistencies, but it regardlessly insists and subsists on formulating previously unachieved concretizations of a

fruitful and revolutionary belonging to itself, thus finding itself situated in additional speculations from the relatively adjacent or "outside" world. These speculations drain out of and feed into diasporic contexts as well, forming yet another layer of complexity in positive hierarchies towards collective individuation—an individuation that accounts for opacity.

The modern education system, much less popular media, cannot accurately account for the large gap in depicting the understated traversals of the Global South with justice and nuance. There is an ever-self-regenerating need to construct new and increasingly experimental ways of authoring local histories and expanding their discoveries into formations previously unrendered. The Haitian experience, both in and outside of the island, has been expressed in countless manifestations since, before, and proceeding this text, largely extrapolated through inherently ephemeral orality; the performance of rituals and other activities such as architectural design, cooking, and making ornaments or tools for amusement; and, as is the subject with which this text is concerned, the viscous, indexical medium referred to as *ink*. This text proposes a complication of Haiti's print history by establishing an understanding of the autonomy and particularized intelligibility of ink as it manipulated the general and specific cognitive conceptions of Haiti as—but not merely—a unique geologic landscape and a newfound home to formerly enslaved Africans who collectively organized to emancipate themselves from their captors, enslavers, exploiters, and murderers—a home which carried on to harbor a uniquely self-identifying cultural comprehension and resultantly birthed various crossovers between modalities at once embodied (in both the Haitian and "other" Self) and otherwise actualized.

The tasks of this text are undertaken by means of subjective and selective speculations on material and immaterial histories of numerous states of being: religious documents and inherited spiritual practices, governmental and legal documents, postage stamps, travel journals, contemporary academic works of scholars of history and other theoretical disciplines, works of poetry, essayism, novels both fiction and nonfiction by Haitian and non-Haitian authors, my own correspondences with collaborators both in and outside of my family, anecdotal remarks from interviews recorded and uploaded to YouTube, posters, and others. The personalized hierarchies of information at work herein seek to materialize yet another compound structure through which Haiti can be productively considered and discussed.

Transmission, as it framed in the context of this writing, is the primary constructor of both lived and imagined reality; and that which is being transmitted, on a material level, is ink. This writing itself, in whatever form it presents itself as to the reader, is a branch of the trajectory from genesis to digestion—from the birth of an idea on a page to the commemoration of events past—events which are evolved children of the page's own ideas.

The primary method of the transmission of historical and other kinds of fact-based information has been semantics, whether through the written text or the symbolic signs of other forms of representation (i.e. non-linguistic representation) such as found in street signs or artworks. This transmission often follows the logic of a traversal of ink from the time-space of possibility (preexistence) into objecthood, or what we might understand as the present quickly becoming the past, often manifesting as a kind of mediation expressed on a base, like oak gall ink on the fibrous pages of the Gutenberg Bible. From this state of

objecthood, ink then takes on a metaphysical presence as the ideas which can be deduced from the semantic languages of its whole being—it is no longer simply a pamphlet or a book or a painting, but slowly becomes the very epistemological tool through which ideas are shared, understood, established, and enacted.

Print history is integral to the creation of phenomena collectively understood at all levels. Ink is aware of this fact and thus engages in processes which allow for the fortification of results stemming from dedication towards the past. Ink is invested in a paradox: preservation. It carries out this investment by granting a form to the formless, hence allowing its susceptibility to physical manipulation. An idea expressed through a whisper cannot yield the essential haptics of a note card, as the note card is like a body; it has form and takes up space—it makes one aware of space through positivism.

This text institutes an autotheory inasmuch as it is written from the perspective of an author, myself, who strongly believes in the case for understanding ink on its own terms as a way of attempting to comprehend the timeline of unformed histories. It is not that ink has not composed and addressed these lyrical futurities, but rather it harbors an expectation that I engage with it in search of a way to organize its parts as not only an extension of a certain knowledge (the knowledge of Haiti as a phenomenon), but also as a forced extension of myself into such realms of existence and susceptibility.

My life has largely been influenced by that which is not commonly understood as having rooted connections in the history of Haiti, and my life naturally tries to contend with this ‘outsideness’ in part by reconsidering what it means to be Haitian, especially in the context

of forced migration. Even the ‘found object’ necessitates an emergence from a position of being nullified, of *lack*. Similarly, ink aligns itself with the outsidenesses herein to assist me in asking these questions.

In some ways, this is a project of self-ethnography. It is an experiment in developing an unfixed, unrestricted artificiality towards the other. Thus, it bases itself on textual histories, as things often do when experiencing spatial divergence from their subjects. The printed object inherently addresses this issue by necessitating travel, whether across avenues or across seas. This text approaches Haiti as part of the Real, but also as a fantasy which owes its own conception to literary processes and their exigencies.

The first portion of this text serves to situate a selection of various historical materials related to the Haitian experience alongside one another to speculate on the relationships between them, and further, to imply acknowledgment and exclamation with respects to the contextual elements of the materials themselves, or, more precisely, the materiality itself. Over the course of nine sections, these problematics, so to speak, are systematically addressed according to the theoretical framework upheld by the ink which allowed me, the compiler, to develop a certain understanding of its behaviors, tendencies, and especially its proclivities. In this use-case, the chronological methodology does not serve to suggest a linearity insofar as the Haitian context, experience, or textual history are concerned writ-large, but rather seeks to take on an organizational function in narrating the autonomous actions of ink. Therefore, the intricacies of the Haitian Revolution and lives of L’Ouverture and Dessalines, for example, are not detailed herein.

This examination of the Haitian context attempts to recenter Haiti in regards to the evolution of its culture, but considers the wider international and inter-generational implications of its revolutionary history, supplanting anecdotal, religious, and poethical perspectives to complicate both popular and fringe interpretations of the complexities of the native and diasporic Haitian condition.

The second portion contains letters sent between myself and a young man named Josias, a Haitian native who makes a living as a screen printer for a commercial company. Josias works for American entrepreneur and philanthropist Kathy Brooks who has been based in Gonaives since 2005. Her company employs native Haitian practitioners who are paid living wages in exchange for their creative skills and services in manufacturing products like T-shirts, mugs, and tea towels. After discovering her project, I contacted Brooks to request to commission her head screen printer, Josias, to produce a series of prints on paper to be framed and exhibited in New York in 2025. I also requested to contact Josias directly through epistolary notes.

As the text elaborates, Gonaives bears major historical significance in relation to Haiti's print ecology given that it is the site where the Haitian Declaration of Independence was first read aloud in a public situation. However, the copy which was read from that day was printed not in Gonaives, but in Port-au-Prince, then transported. This proclamation, performed by famed carrier of the L'Ouverturean torch, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, on the first day of the first month of the first year of Haiti's historiography as a nation (according to the print object) was the punctum of the image of the revolution. This proclamation can be thought of as the first rotation in the cyclical feedback loop through which the spoken idea

reifies the print object, the labor and being of which are derived from the hands and geographies involved in its final 'life'.

This text is concerned with the labor of print and thereby seeks to provide a realm in which the relations of class to all levels of production can take place with an openness to criticism not just by theoretical means but practical and implied ones. This methodology of collaboration invites questions surrounding topics of authorship, physical and other forms of work. It seeks to forge material and metaphysical representations of geographical and institutional processes and diversify relationships between contact zones. The goal of this communication and, by extension, reflections on its outcomes, is to explore the extents of artistic production through all those who involved in its taking place as well as the trans-spatial process that is the circulation of the print object.

The third and final section of this text serves to illustrate and historicize the backgrounds and happenings of the nine missions undertaken by the United Nations in Haiti between 1993 and 2019—the actions for which eight series of commemorative medals issued to the soldiers who partook in these missions were produced. These medals, which commonly circulate in the online collector's market as both originals and copies, were the basis for the designs of the screen prints which I commissioned Josias to create. The vertical color bands of these medals are often described by UN officials as carrying significant metaphorical importance to the historical and socioeconomic relations between territories and sometimes change across years and issuances.

The ongoing effects of the UN's involvement in the welfare of the Haitian people has garnered much criticism and, to an extent, a level of praise. By piecing together a structured chronology of these missions using the increasingly available resources for seeing and hearing—however censored or obscured—images and words of the ongoings of foreign or semi-foreign nations, the conclusive portion of this text seeks to exemplify the conditions of the contemporary Haitian experience for non-specific groups of people, implementing pedestrian stature to meet these facts, the constituents of modernity as we encounter it. Thereby, the representational extents of the screenprinted colorfields point not merely to the ideas imposed on them by UN officials, but indeed point to the actions with which the pigments are associated and the overall situational ontology of today's Haiti.

The intended function of this text as a whole is not to author a perfect or even linear chronology of Haiti's history, or even a part of it—that would be not only impossible but naive—but rather to understand a number of varying expressions, particularly as it has been controlled and manipulated by liquid writing compounds within the realms in which knowledge has come to morph itself, in order to establish these speculations as critical and actualized, as ink continues to pulsate in the veins of the pursuit of having a past.

In direct collaboration with both theoretical frameworks and physical actions, the tangible materiality of viscous liquid—appearing as syntactic symbol, representational image, or something else entirely—has allowed for specificities in the possibilities of speculating on ways to destabilize and reorient the understanding of Haiti from both inside and outside of it, and to those ends the prospects of this paper are so concerned.

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Let us make Armand Jean du Plessis de Richelieu, *l'Éminence Rouge,* the start of our discussion. A cardinal bishop of the Catholic faith and senior-level advisor of the highest status to King Louis XIII of France, Richelieu used his proximity to the aristocracy to enter into the slave trade at the inaugural emergence of the 'New World'. Richelieu hoped to use the funds procured from the subjugation of human beings to afford a navy capable of defeating the British Crown, and in order to do so, needed to convince the anti-slavery rulership to enact this violence as part of a larger missionary project, which would see the enslaved plantation laborers as a branch of the French Christian body rather than as laboring human commodities bearing no clear distinction from commercial goods and processes.

Richelieu was advisor to the King when he issued the 1627 Ordonnance, stating in part,

"*The descendants of the French who are accustomed to this country* [New France]*, together with all the* [West] *Indians who will be brought to the knowledge of the* [Catholic] *faith and will profess it, shall be deemed and renowned natural Frenchmen, and as such may come to live in France when they want, and acquire, donate, and succeed and accept donations and legacies, just as true French subjects, without being required to take letters of declaration of naturalization.***"**[1]

[1] Établissement de la Compagnie des Indes Occidentales, dans Édits, ordonnances royaux, déclarations et arrêts du Conseil d'État du Roi concernant le Canada, Québec, E. R. Fréchette, 1854, p 46.
https://web.archive.org/web/20160821130904/http://notrehistoire.net/textes_histoire_droit/CN_Memoire.pdf

About a century later, Father Jean-Baptiste Margat de Tilly, a French missionary living in Saint-Domingue, wrote diaristically about the enslaved population, stating that they were the “object” of the church’s hard work and, while acknowledging that they had been deeply wronged, believed that their ‘natural simplicity’ made them inherently receptive to the Catholic message.[2]

The permeation of Christian belief systems into the theories and practices of what would become the modern Haitian theological culture began at the dawn of the age of exploration, the precursor and co-constituent to colonial exploitation. The impetus of this acculturation was the arrival of the proselytizing Europeans—first Spanish, then French—who brought with them a deep object, the print Bible, created at the beginning of the technological age, the age of capital. Even before that, Portuguese priests were bringing Christianity to Africa’s western coast. These Christians, primarily of the Catholic faith, succeeded in popularizing their religious traditions amongst the people of Saint-Domingue, but could never unroot the underlying teachings and practices of their homeland, as the displaced, newly formed Haitian population was always incorporating the African origins of its very existence into their spiritual and theological structures.

Ink’s relationship to the Bible and the general spread of Christian principles across the globe beginning in the 14th century spans histories reaching across time, but serves a particularly crucial significance as far as Haiti is concerned from the moment the Bible began to be printed with a press and sold en masse. Johannes Gutenberg’s famous press and resulting bibles are a touchstone in the long and undead story of this trace-making paste who

[2] George Breathett, “Religious Protectionism and the Slave in Haiti.” *The Catholic Historical Review*, Apr., 1969, Vol. 55, No. 1 (Apr., 1969), p. 27

conveys information without a hint of resistance or friction, given its only desire—rather, its only capability—is to portray. It is essentially, by design, constitutive of productive elements. The advanced mechanization and factory-like assembly-line production method of these near-ancient texts represent and give life to the patterns of theocratic monarchy entrenched in the seemingly infinite route-takings of energetic reproductive compounds.

The first press-printed bibles were made in Germany around the middle 13th century, were in the Latin language, and were reserved for a privileged minority. It would take an entire farm's worth of cattle to produce the pages necessary for the construction of but one of these coveted relics. Materially, they starkly contrast the hand-copied editions which preceded them. The uniformity of the ink's weight and overall arrival on the page foreshadowed a new era of the Christian holy manuscript—an era of proliferation, accessibility, and experimentational development. And even before the Gutenberg press or any of its bibles, the metaphysics of the words which would be recorded therein presented the outline of the then oral Abrahamic tradition of distributing information, which was heavily based on the capacity for creative exchange.

"By Abraham's time—about the 19th century B.C. —religious practices of the newly established Babylonians in Mesopotamia were already ancient, since they were built on those of the earlier Sumerian civilization. Such borrowing from other religions was common. When invaders conquered a people they often took over the existing gods and goddesses, renamed them, and added them to their own pantheon."[3]

[3] "The Bible through the Ages." Reader's Digest Association, Inc, 1996, p. 22

As later portions of this text elaborate, a major area of debate among the Haitian people, and a site for exoticism especially in Western popular media, Haitian Vodou was and remains an enigmatic and mystical subject for much of the general public. Haitian Vodou, at the same time, was notably receptive of many of the teachings and historical customs of the Catholic Church, such that the two practices did not conflict with one another on any spiritual basis, and in fact produced highly specific and invariably co-dependent crossovers in already independently complex moral and epistemological concretizations. Structurally, the Abrahamic faiths began similarly to Vodou, in that their traditions and practices were often memorized and transmitted orally long before they began to be written down.

"Although tales of the Creation, of the Flood, and of the Patriarchs and their families started circulating almost as long ago as the events themselves, scribes probably did not begin to write down the lore of the Hebrews—the descendants of Abraham—until King David's reign in the 10th century B.C. By then, many of the tales recorded were already centuries old, but they had been preserved and passed along through a much respected tradition—storytelling.... It might be a shepherd who was admired for his anecdotal expertise and who told his tales to his extended family in an open field, or perhaps it was a celebrated artist who recited by request at festive gatherings—but the storyteller's job was more than simply entertainment. His stories preserved the identity and collective memory of the people. Until writing became common, memory was invaluable, since without it, ideas were lost forever...."[4]

Holding memorization in high regard as the elementary structure of preserving the oral tradition has numerous foundings across the early Abrahamic faiths, and is the backdrop for

[4] Ibid, p. 28-29

the reverence of holy books therein. The Shema is among the most important prayers in the Jewish faith and is traditionally performed twice a day. It is found in both the Babylonian Talmud and the Torah.[5] In the Ve'ahavta (ואהבת) (“and you shall love”) paragraph of the Shema, the "Veshinantam" (ושננתם) (“and you shall teach them”) command is made, which has been interpreted as being a command to memorize, particularly in the age preceding the popular usage of the printing press. A prophetic narration in the Sunni Muslim tradition, recorded in a well-known anthology of narrations referred to as the Book of Tirmidhi, states that a companion of the Muslim prophet Muhammad by the name of Ubayy ibn Ka’ab said, *“The Prophet met with Angel Gabriel and said ‘O Gabriel! Indeed I have been sent [by God] to an unlettered nation; among them is the elderly woman, the old man, the young boy, the young girl, and the man who has never read a book.”*[6]

The attention afforded to the oral transmission of information was the basis for its literary inscription which would come to follow. And this was also the basis for an early debate between members of the latest and earliest Abrahamic faiths, as the Quran, in the Islamic faith, was revealed to the Prophet incrementally over the course of his lifetime and compiled as revelations were being made, unlike the Gospel and Torah, which were complete books at the time of their revelation. This discrepancy carries echoes of the one between ingroups of Protestant Christians, some of whom have gained followers among the people of Haiti, as they deny the legitimacy of each other's prophets. In the 6th chapter of the Quran, Al-An’am

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[5] מסכת ברכות (Berakhot (Blessings), the first tractate)
דברים (Devarim (Deuteronomy) 6:4-9 & 6:13-21)
במדבר (Bmidbar (Book of Numbers) 15:37-41)

[6] لقيَ رسولُ اللَّهِ صلَّى اللهُ علَيهِ وسلَّمَ جبريلَ فقالَ: يا جَبرئيلُ ، إنِّي بُعِثتُ إلى أمَّةٍ أمِّيِّينَ ، منهمُ العجوزُ ، والشَّيخُ الكبيرُ ، والغلامُ ، والجاريةُ ، والرَّجلُ الَّذي لم يقرَأْ كتابًا قطُّ...
صحيح الترمذي, الصفحة أو الرقم: 2944
(Sahih Al-Tirmidhi #2944; my translation)

(الأنعام) (The Cattle), verse 91 catalogs the disparity between oral transmission and literary transmission, raising questions about the capacities of each as repositories for disseminating information: *"And they have not shown Allah His proper reverence when they said, "Allah has revealed nothing to any human being." Say, ˹O Prophet,˺ "Who then revealed the Book brought forth by Moses as a light and guidance for people, which you split into separate sheets—revealing some and hiding much? You have been taught ˹through this Quran˺ what neither you nor your forefathers knew." Say, ˹O Prophet,˺ "Allah ˹revealed it˺!" Then leave them to amuse themselves with falsehood."*[7]

One is then immediately reminded of the Book of Isaiah in the Bible, *"And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:"*[8]

Thousands of years after the apostles originally archived the teachings of the Messiah, the new stability offered by the written word allowed ink to project the theological idealism of

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[7] وَمَا قَدَرُواْ ٱللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِۦٓ إِذْ قَالُواْ مَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ بَشَرٍ مِّن شَىْءٍ ۗ قُلْ مَنْ أَنزَلَ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ ٱلَّذِى جَآءَ بِهِۦ مُوسَىٰ نُورًا وَهُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ ۖ تَجْعَلُونَهُۥ قَرَاطِيسَ تُبْدُونَهَا وَتُخْفُونَ كَثِيرًا ۖ وَعُلِّمْتُم مَّا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوٓاْ أَنتُمْ وَلَآ ءَابَآؤُكُمْ ۖ قُلِ ٱللَّهُ ۙ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِى خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ

(Quran, 6:91) Translation from Dr. Mustafa Khattab's "The Clear Quran: A Thematic English Translation." Book of Signs Foundation, 2016. https://quran.com/al-anam/91

(Note: Around 2020, the popular digitized Quran website quran.com changed its official (/default) translation from the coveted 1997 Sahih International translation to Dr. Khattab's newer translation).

[8] Isaiah 29:11-13 KJV

the Christian 'explorers' of old into the hearts and epistemology of the enslaved African populous of the West Indies. And much like the Bible, other forms of ink-based manipulations found roots in the reparative beliefs that practitioners of Vodou ascribed to the chromolithographs of Catholic saints, as they were transformed from images of Cosmas and Damien to the Jumeaux Marassa[9] [10].

Historian Erica Johnson says, **"***The French Crown cemented the relationship between the Catholic Church and its colonies when it decreed the Code noir (Black Code) in 1685,* [which forbade the practice of any religion other than Roman Catholicism]. *Catholicism was central to this decree. Although intended to regulate relations between masters and slaves, Catholicism appeared throughout the Code noir. The first article of the edict explained the need for the authority and justice of the French Crown to maintain Catholicism before mentioning any regulations on slavery.*

...While the clergy did, indeed, own plantations and slaves...some clergy members helped slaves become literate, while other priests even allowed slaves to catechize or even conduct mass."[11]

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[9]Melville J. Herskovits, "Life in a Haitian Valley." New York: *Alfred A. Knopf*, 1937. p. 158, 205

[10]"The Marasa, or Sacred Twins, are often depicted as three rather than two because twins represent abundant life, and triplets signal surpassing abundance. Broadly, the Marasa represent all those born in special circumstance: e.g. multiple or breach birth children, those with extra fingers or toes, or those born with a membrane (caul) over their head. Even more generally, they stand for the sacredness of all children. Every 'nation' of divinities has its Marasa. They are invoked along with Papa Legba at the start of each Vodou ceremony. In addition they are linked with the lwa Gede, who has special concerns for children. They are most commonly syncretized with twin saints Cosmas and Damian, and with the Virtues, called 'The Three Egyptians.'"

https://digital.libraries.psu.edu/digital/collection/arthist2/id/128503/

[11] Erica Johnson, "Rosaries and Revolution: Father Philemon, Catholicism, and the Haitian Revolution," 2015. https://ageofrevolutions.com/2015/12/07/rosaries-and-revolution-father-philemon-catholicism-and-the-haitian-revolution/

Contrary to Johnson, George Breathett is sure to ask the important question, *"Was the Code Noir effective and enforced? While there were evidences of cruelty and religious indifference toward slaves in Haiti, with the Code providing some basis for cruelty in the punishments prescribed for several offenses, it can be said that this document at least gave the slave a form of constitutional protection, though un-enforceable and often ignored on a day-to-day basis. Vassire states that notwithstanding some abuses, the more responsible colonist approved the Code. Those who did not expressed their resentment by ignoring the Church's coffers.[12] The Crown responded to this reaction by placing a tax receiver in each district to collect monies destined for the Church."*[13]

It is my belief that the legacy of Catholicism in 17th century Haiti is that it hardly offered the humanity it boasted to the very people it purported were the "objects" of its sacred messages and teachings, and at once funneled tax funds from the pockets and crops of slave owners into the financial well of the church of New France. What, in reality, is there to be said in the way of "constitutional protection" amidst the violence of enslavement? The Code Noir were a disgraceful mishap on the part of ink and those who caused them to be instituted.

"So systemic was the abuse of the slaves that it supported a profession of executioners whose fees were regulated by law. The charge to burn a man alive, for example, was set at sixty French pounds. A hanging was only thirty, and for a mere five pounds, you could have a slave branded and his ears cut off.... Forced labor was the foundation of an economic system...[of]

[12] Boxes for storing alms (donations)
[13] George Breathett, "Religious Protectionism and the Slave in Haiti." *The Catholic Historical Review*, April 1969, Vol. 55, No. 1 (April 1969), p. 32

European class societies whose elite thought nothing of hanging an English child for petty theft…"[14]

And further, it is the fault of ink that the start of Haiti's print history is precisely the way it is—gaping with wound-shaped holes of bloodlust. To speak about the creation of Haiti is to speak not just about an island country of mostly descendants of Western Africa—it is not simply to laud its beauties or to defile the wrongdoings which take place therein, but it is a mixture of both and many more indescribable actions. Christianity, ethnography, science, engineering, philosophy, literature, and in fact printmaking are all amongst the myriad factors which contribute to the trajectory of the knowledge of Haiti.

Take 16th century Frenchman Jean-Baptiste Labat for example, who found himself in all of these fields amongst others unmentioned, including gastronomy, botany, cartography, and mathematics. Labat, though, was most attracted to missionary work under the Dominican Order. Labat, a slave-holding landowner, spent over a decade in the West Indies beginning in 1683 and published a six-volume history of the region complete with illustrations, often referred to by its short name "Nouveau Voyage aux isles Françoises de l'Amérique," or "New Voyage to the French Islands of America," in 1722. The full name of the text, which details the scope of his project, translates to, *"New voyage to the islands of America, containing the natural history of these countries, the origin, customs, religion and government of the ancient and modern inhabitants. The wars and singular events which occurred there during the long stay that the Author made there. The commerce and manufactures which are established*

[14] Wade Davis, "The Serpent and the Rainbow: A Harvard Scientist's Astonishing Journey into the Secret Society of Haitian Voodoo, Zombis, and Magic," 1985. Simon and Schuster, New York. pp 201

there, and the means of increasing them. With an accurate and intriguing description of all these islands. Work enriched with more than one hundred maps, plans, and intaglio figures."[15]

Labat's detailed study of the customs of the inhabitants of not just Saint-Domingue, but the surrounding regions as well, carefully and deeply inscribes a subjective view of the area into mass production. There seems to be no information too inconsequential for Labat's pen. Amidst his extensive ravings on the culinary arts of the West Indies, Labat issues an apology to the reader, admitting that for an apostolic missionary he writes a great deal on the nature of meals and recipes, which offers him a particularly understated self-realization; he marks his practices as simply carrying out a series of God-given obligations, which could be then reconnected to his inventions in sugar refinement by laborious processes inevitably carried out by slaves—the whole process, from the cane plantation to jars of jam set on a dining table, well-documented using the ink of his own press.

Thinly veiled behind all his work is a deep Catholic sentiment, which sees slavery as a natural extension of man's God-given rights. Labat is writing in a time in which enslaved persons in Saint Domingue, "if recaptured on the fringe of the plantation, they were simply returned to be flogged and publicly humiliated, made to kneel outside the white man's church to beg forgiveness for "insubordination to the situation in which God had placed him.""[16]

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[15] "Nouveau voyage aux îles de l'Amérique, contenant l'histoire naturelle de ces pays, l'origine, les mœurs, la religion & le gouvernement des habitants anciens et modernes. Les guerres et les événements singuliers qui y sont arrivés pendant le long séjour que l'Auteur y a fait. Le commerce & les manufactures qui y sont établies, et les moyens de les augmenter, Avec une Description exacte et curieuse de toutes ces îles, ouvrages enrichi de plus de cent Cartes, Pians, et Figures en Tailles - douces." Jean-Baptiste Labat, Paris: Guillaume Cavelier, 1722.
[16] Wade Davis, "The Serpent and the Rainbow: A Harvard Scientist's Astonishing Journey into the Secret Society of Haitian Voodoo, Zombis, and Magic," 1985. Simon and Schuster, New York. pp 192

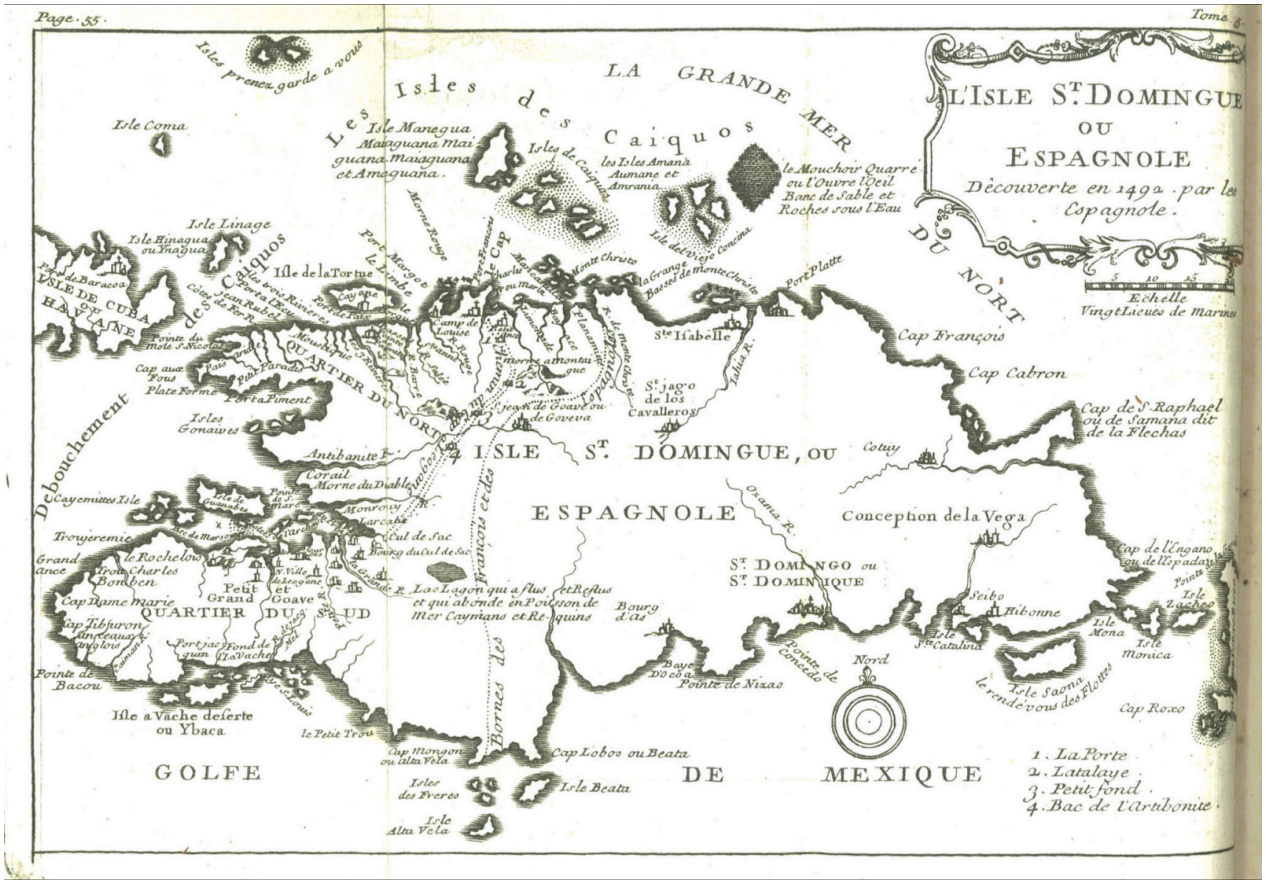

Fig 1.

Jean-Baptiste “Pere” Labat

L'isle Saint Domingue ou Espagnole, Découverte en 1492 par les Espagnole (Santo Domingo or Spanish Island, Discovered in 1492 by the Spanish)

Illustration from "Nouveau voyage aux îles de l'Amérique,” 1722[17]

[17] https://www.flickr.com/photos/universite_caen/32206059635/in/photostream/

Historian Suzanne Toczyski, who has authored a good deal of work on Labat's journals, says of his apology, **"***This statement…points to an apparent tension, if not contradiction, between Labat's epistemological enterprise and his apostolic mission and, as such, warrants further attention. First, Labat is conscious of the role place plays in this process: if he had remained in his cloister, none of this encyclopedic culinary documentation would have been necessary, as his needs would have been met by simple monastic fare. He therefore couches his apology in terms of obligation and obedience to his order: he is obliged to take care of his household, he is obliged to become an autodidact, all this because he has obediently undertaken this mission, and is thus obliged to acquire, accumulate, and, of course, record knowledge essential to the continuation of life. Hence, Labat constructs an identity for himself according to which he lives in the tension between the need for knowledge (which, on the one hand, appears self-indulgent but is, in fact, evidence of his self-reliance) and the deprivations conventionally associated with life as a Catholic missionary.***"***[18]*

The intellectual gymnastics required to create such justifications seemed to get less and less popular as the slave trade grew and eventually reached a peak. As Breathett elaborates: **"***The century was also marked by phenomenal prosperity, based on a plantation economy with slave labor. The number of slaves increased from 100,000 in 1726 to 452,000 by 1789. Such numbers made instruction and rapid indoctrination by the available priests difficult, and resulted in a transitional period when old pagan beliefs and the newly taught Catholicism were on an equal plane.***"***[19]*

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[18] Suzanne Toczyski, "Jean-Baptiste Labat and the Buccaneer Barbecue in Seventeenth-Century Martinique." *Gastronomica* , Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter 2010), pp. 61-69. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/gfc.2010.10.1.61

[19] George Breathett, "Religious Protectionism and the Slave in Haiti." *The Catholic Historical Review*, April 1969, Vol. 55, No. 1 (April 1969), p. 33

It is also Catholicism which necessitates a bilingualism in Haiti by relegating the designation of Creole[20] to the "common-folk" and French to institutions such as those connected to religious faith, secular education, and governmental rulings. The functions of etymology and language generally-considered are paramount to the behavioral state of ink, and contribute directly to the perceptible nature of the contact and cohabitation of the text object. The French language provided the enslaved with a projectable communication system to be overwritten and architectonically altered to reflect and suit the uses of the Haitian people; and the myriad African tribal origins of Creole embellished and particularized the traversals of Haitian speech such that it may preserve the formal identity of the ancestral homeland from which it derived without forsaking the lived reality of the harms enacted upon it by Francophone society. Haitian Creolization brought both the French and African languages to dialectical terms untapped by either of their respective counterparts, and, characteristically, did not spare the integrity of European-language bibles.

The first French language press-printed bibles, the work of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and his colleagues, were made in Antwerp, Belgium in the early 16th century. These works can be thought of as those which grandfathered the bibles whose tutelage gave birth to the first Haitian Christians. From one transcription to another, the French Bible slowly entered common practices and beliefs. While Creole was the language of the Haitian people, French remained the language of the colonized insofar as education—religious or otherwise—was concerned. Further, since 1683, only children of Catholic parents were allowed to study in Haitian public schools until the early 19th century, around the implementation of Dessalines' 1805 Haitian Constitution.

[20] In this text, I use the terms "Creole," "Haitian Creole," and "Kreyòl" interchangeably to refer to the same language/concept.

Here, as this paper is indebted to his methodology, it should be stated that Carl C. Campbell, Professor of History at the University of the West Indies (UWI) in Mona, Jamaica, has addressed the topic of the early Haitian education system with what is, in my view, an essay par excellence. In 2004, the same year he retired from teaching, he published "Education and Society in Haiti 1804-1843" in the 50th volume of *Caribbean Quarterly*, titled "Haiti – Essays in honour of the Bicentenary of Independence 1804-2004." Professor Campbell begins by explaining what we will be reading:

"The following paper takes the form of an imaginary discussion among two university teachers and three postgraduate students from different Faculties of the University of the West Indies....The discussion is similar to what might well take place in a small graduate seminar on the subject after a paper in the usual narrative/analytic form has been presented. The difference is that in this case there is no paper, but the discussion itself takes the form of the paper. The structural integrity of the discussion resides in the phase by phase, event by event management of the views of the participants. This inherent structure replaces headings and paragraphs which would appear in a traditional continuous narrative/analytic paper.

The author in adopting this approach does not desire to enter the postmodernist debates about the viability of the traditional narrative as a vehicle of history. The author's methodology still involves a search for the truth about what really happened in Haiti through the traditional use of the sources. The unusual presentation has been adopted because of a number of advantages it appears to possess...
It should be emphasized that the presentation is not meant to be a kind of drama; nor are the matters discussed fictional. Only the characters participating in the discussion are fictional,

but they are all talking about the history of Haiti as they know and understand it. The author is responsible for the views of all the participants; they express his knowledge, his lack of knowledge, his switches of perspectives, his questions, his doubts or uncertainties."[21]

Professor Campbell, by mirroring the system-process of theory-formation in a specialized group setting, namely the collegiate academic setting, illustrates the context of the 'search for the happenings of Haiti' from a personal standpoint—so personalized, in fact, that it verges on a kind of madness in which the author is little different from a method actor rehearsing the roles of each character in a self-directed screenplay. He asks questions of *who* is doing the research and *what* the afterlife of this research might be, while engaging with rooted archival histories to do so. The true protagonist of Campbell's questioning becomes the very tools at one's disposal—the educational complex and socialization as a whole. His methodology is precisely in-line with the analytical framework that ink seeks to perform herein.

Campbell's paper begins with Dr. Wells, a male university history lecturer, asking a good question, "*Have you ever seen a copy of Dessalines constitution of 1805? Daniel Fignole says that article 19 of it called for a school, presumably a government school in each military division of the country. Since there were then 6 such divisions, Dessalines and his advisers were thinking of only 6 schools…*"[22] Campbell's imaginary academics proceed to argue over Dessalines' illiteracy, the *actual* author(s) of the 1805 Declaration, and briefly mention the Catholic church's lack of serious presence in the education or literature of Haiti before Dr.

[21] Carl Campbell, "Education and Society in Haiti 1804-1843." *Caribbean Quarterly*, December 2004, Vol. 50, No. 4, p. 14. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40654476
[22] Ibid, p. 15

Wells and his colleague Dr. Payne, whose gender is not made clear, shift the topic by saying, *"I thought that the debate was going to swing around the question: were any government schools started, where, and for whom? It certainly is dangerous to assume that schools take their rise from the paper on which constitutions or laws are written. The early—indeed—the entire 19th century history of education in Haiti is bedeviled by great uncertainties, indeed controversies, about the existence or non-existence of schools said to have been started."*[23]

Campbell's "Education and Society" creates a structural balance which makes room for opposing truths and allows for conflicts and contradictions to arise in his research. It is architecturally and atomically much like the reality of the print object itself: it bears a deceptive fallibility. It performs the semblances and characteristics of permanence by suggesting that ink is not only ancient but as old as age itself, and not only archival but everlasting. Ink finds its terrible and magnificent way into old books in new ways and vice versa.

According to an email[24] written by Marilyn P. Mason—who worked on the first translations of the Bible into Haitian Creole, having been invested in the project since the 1970s—a portion of the Haitian Creole Bible was published for the first time in 1927, the New Testament was first published in 1951, and the first complete Haitian Creole Bible, *Bib La*, was written in 1985. An updated Bible was later published in 1993 by the Haitian Bible Society in Port-au-Prince. The history of the Bible in Haiti has always been collaborative, touching many hands, and transnational, traversing across cultural and geographic boundaries.

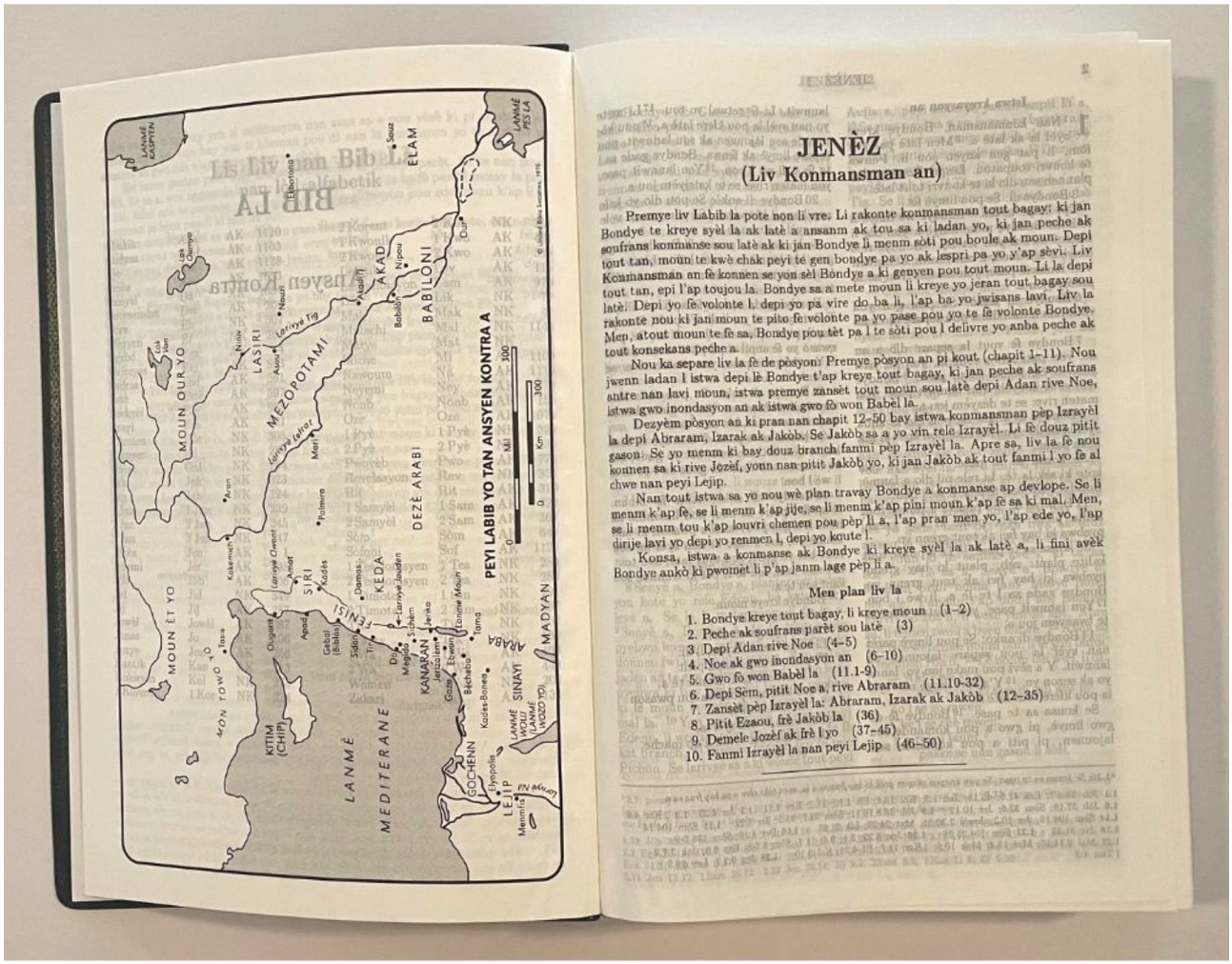
[23] Ibid p. 16
[24] The email was made public by St. Louis, Missouri-based Webster University professor Bob Corbett who ran a blog on Haiti and had traveled there upwards of 50 times between 1982 and 2010. http://faculty.webster.edu/corbetre/haiti-archive-new/msg17165.html

Mason writes: *"In response to recent notes posted to the Corbett List regarding the genesis of the Haitian Creole Bible (crediting either Fr. Aristide or Fr. Desir as translators who undertook the whole project as single individuals), I'd like to add a few details. (I'm sure there are other folks who can add even more background material). Although a number of individuals (including Desir, McConnell and Rocourt) produced individual books or worked together with others to produce a more cohesive compilation, the Haitian Bible Society (in partnership with the Canadian Bible Society) as an entity is officially credited with publishing the original Haitian Creole Bible in Pressoir-Faublas orthography (circa 1985) and then very recently publishing the IPN orthographically-updated version*[25]*.*

The books which can be downloaded...are samples of Bible books (Genesis; Exodus; Ruth; Esther; Psalms; Ecclesiastes; Jeremiah; John; Acts; Romans; Hebrews; Revelation) which have undergone an automated process called CreoleConvert [developed as MMHCOC (Mason Method for Haitian Creole Orthography Conversion) by Marilyn P. Mason in 1991 and upgraded at regular intervals since then]."[26]

[25] An orthographic system (conventions for written language) of Haitian Creole was developed by Protestant missionaries in Haiti. The earliest could possibly be said to be that instituted under Haitian writer and diplomat Georges Sylvain in 1901, though it was not made largely accessible. In 1940, Irish Methodist missionaries H. Ormonde and Primrose McConnell devised and published the first widely available Creole orthography, and three years later missionary and literacy specialist Frank Laubach revised and co-published a new edition, the McConnell-Laubach orthography. Many others were instituted between then and 1979, when the Haitian Institut Pédagogique National (IPN) orthography was adopted. For a detailed history of Haitian Creole orthography, see Dr. Matthew Robertshaw's "Haitian Creole Comes of Age: Philology, Orthography, Education, and Literature in the "Haitian Sixties," 1934-1957" in *Journal of Haitian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring 2020), pp. 4-36 https://www.jstor.org/stable/26987399

[26] See footnote 14.



JENÈZ
(Liv Konmansman an)

Premye liv Labib la pote non li vre. Li rakonte konmansman tout bagay: ki jan Bondye te kreye syèl la ak latè a ansanm ak tou sa ki ladan yo, ki jan peche ak soufrans konmanse sou latè ak ki jan Bondye li menm sòti pou boule ak moun. Depi tout tan, moun te kwè chak peyi te gen bondye pa yo ak lespri pa yo y'ap sèvi. Liv Konmansman an fè konnen se yon sèl Bondye a ki genyen pou tout moun. Li la depi tout tan, epi l'ap toujou la. Bondye sa a mete moun li kreye yo jeran tout bagay sou latè. Depi yo fè volonte l, depi yo pa vire do ba li, l'ap ba yo jwisans lavi. Liv la rakonte nou ki jan moun te pito fè volonte pa yo pase pou yo te fè volonte Bondye. Men, atout moun te fè sa, Bondye pou tèt pa l te sòti pou l delivre yo anba peche ak tout konsekans peche a.

Nou ka separe liv la fè de pòsyon: Premye pòsyon an pi kout (chapit 1–11). Nou jwenn ladan l istwa depi lè Bondye t'ap kreye tout bagay, ki jan peche ak soufrans antre nan lavi moun, istwa premye zansèt tout moun sou latè depi Adan rive Noe, istwa gwo inondasyon an ak istwa gwo fò won Babèl la.

Dezyèm pòsyon an ki pran nan chapit 12–50 bay istwa konmansman pèp Izrayèl la depi Abraram, Izarak ak Jakòb. Se Jakòb sa a yo vin rele Izrayèl. Li fè douz pitit gason. Se yo menm ki bay douz branch fanmi pèp Izrayèl la. Apre sa, liv la fè nou konnen sa ki rive Jozèf, yonn nan pitit Jakòb yo, ki jan Jakòb ak tout fanmi l yo fè al chwe nan peyi Lejip.

Nan tout istwa sa yo nou wè plan travay Bondye a konmanse ap devlope. Se li menm k'ap fè, se li menm k'ap jije, se li menm k'ap pini moun k'ap fè sa ki mal. Men, se li menm tou k'ap louvri chemen pou pèp li a, l'ap pran men yo, l'ap ede yo, l'ap dirije lavi yo depi yo renmen l, depi yo koute l.

Konsa, istwa a konmanse ak Bondye ki kreye syèl la ak latè a, li fini avèk Bondye ankò ki pwomèt li p'ap janm lage pèp li a.

Men plan liv la

1. Bondye kreye tout bagay, li kreye moun (1–2)
2. Peche ak soufrans parèt sou latè (3)
3. Depi Adan rive Noe (4–5)
4. Noe ak gwo inondasyon an (6–10)
5. Gwo fo won Babèl la (11.1-9)
6. Depi Sèm, pitit Noe a, rive Abraram (11.10-32)
7. Zansèt pèp Izrayèl la: Abraram, Izarak ak Jakòb (12–35)
8. Pitit Ezaou, frè Jakòb la (36)
9. Demele Jozèf ak frè l yo (37–45)
10. Fanmi Izrayèl la nan peyi Lejip (46–50)

Fig 2.

Société Biblique Haïtienne (Haitian Bible Society)

Illustration of “Peyi labib yo tan ansyen kontra a” (The Bible lands of the old covenant).

Bib La: Edisyon 1999, Nan nouvo òtograf la. Edision korije ak diksione. Parol Bondie an Ayisyin. (The Bible: 1999 Edition, In the new spelling. Corrected edition with dictionary. The Word of God in Haitian [Creole]).[27]

Vinyl bound, 435 pages

8.25" x 6" x 1.25" (20.9 x 15.2 x 3.175 cm)

[27] https://www.shepherdsbooks.org/product/haitian-creole-holy-bible-paperback/

The publishing of the Creole Bible created a number of changes in the trajectory of Haiti's religious history. It gave life to a sacred text in the very language created by the situation in which the Haitian people found themselves. It traveled chaotic, spiraling into the first foreign literature to find its way into their lives—perhaps for some the first literary deep object they had ever built an experience with. No longer did French elitism dictate biblical interpretations or even the basic interpersonal relationship between a believer and their holy book. Through *Haitian* ink, a new wave of Protestantism found its footing in Haiti, demonizing further the Vodou practice as it arrived.

In 2021, I called my mother from New York and asked what her most vivid memory of Haiti was—what object, what material, what structure she remembered most. She moved from her home city of Port-Au-Prince to the United States when she was a young teenager in the 1980s.

She thought about it for a long time. I remember hearing nothing but the faintly whirring drone between the phone and the room she was sitting in. I remember saying, "hello?" Once, I had recalled being a small child and hearing her tell stories, reminiscing over the toasty smell of fresh nuts roasting on the beach near the shore as she walked with her sisters, the three of them carrying water together and, as always, the old woman behind the pan smiled up at her. I can picture the palm-lined shoreside as the Euclidean background.

When my mother responded, she said,
"There were papers flying everywhere. Men came rushing into the house—your uncles were all gone—I remember my grandmother telling me to hide under the bed. The men went

through all the drawers and all the folders, throwing all the papers behind them while they searched the documents. They flew out into the smoky, dusty streets. I remember that they went up to your great-grandmother and they sprayed chemicals in her eyes."

My mother was brought up in, though is no longer part of, the Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA), a Protestant Christian denomination which began in Battle Creek, Michigan and evolved in the United States over the course of the 19th century out of the usage of 'concordances,' diagrammatic tables for understanding the stories and theories of the Bible in a syncretic, associative manner. Much of the religion is based on the visions experienced by a woman named Ellen G. White, a controversial figure who had ascertained a high level in the church. For many years prior to the revocation of his fellowship in the church, John Harvey Kellogg, most well known for owning the Corn Flakes cereal company, lesser known for his medical work and organizing around the development of eugenics and race science, was a most important donor to the church. Without dwelling too long on the peculiar history of the church and its claims, nor the numerous differences between sub-divisions of the denomination or its notable susceptibility to conspiracy theory, I would like to briefly exemplify the anomalous status of ink as it forged a reality for a substantial minority of Haiti's self-identifying Christian population. This is a curiously under-addressed happenstance of the culture of Haiti, and it is indebted to the literary tradition, as most if not all forms of Christianity are.

The bible is situated at the forefront of Adventist beliefs, and they are known to use standard bible translations to form their doctrinal calculations and comprehensions. In terms of the SDA Church's relationship to the bible more generally stated, it could be said

that its most important verses are three, the first of which appears in the Book of Daniel: *"And he said unto me, unto 2300 days, then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."*[28] Simply stated, this verse serves as the basis for the church's focus on Advent, or the imminent second coming of Christ, and was interpreted by SDA officials as meaning the end times would commence on October 22, 1844, which came and passed, leading to the event known as The Great Disappointment.

The Adventist yearning for the apocalypse, a deeply seeded ecstatic spiritual interest in not only the ceasing to exist of this material realm as we know it, but the eventuation of an exclusive utopic eternity, is precisely that harrowing and yieldless quality of our chief protagonist, ink, the same one languidly aging and being reborn as countless original copies until and after this very moment. They are all looking for a version of *Ginen*. A place beyond earthly problematics—beyond the inability to be accepted, or to excel. A place which mirror's Haraway's *elsewhere*[29]. The Earth, then, is simply a medium, or a bridge. The idea that there is a presently inaccessible place beyond a world dictated by ink lives on permeable within most (if not all) theological conceptions. Ink provides an unbounded phantasmagoria of ideations on what is manifest beyond mortal consciousness.

Another foundational text for the SDA church appears in Exodus: *"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, …For in six days the Lord made*

[28] Daniel 8:14 KJV
[29] Haraway, Donna. "17. 'The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others'". Cybersexualities: A Reader in Feminist Theory, Cyborgs and Cyberspace, Edinburgh: *Edinburgh University Press,* 1999, pp. 295. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781474473668-022

the heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it."[30] This section is the origin of its Sabbatarian beliefs, and is what separates the church from most Christian denominations today. Adventists are Sabbath-keepers, which means they venerate Saturday as the holiest day of the week, as opposed to Sunday. Adventists see Sunday-worship as the prophesied mark of the beast.

But the greatest difference between the SDA church's biblical interpretations is found in the Book of Joel: *"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions."*[31] This verse was explained by Mrs. White's husband as proving the prophethood of his wife and her capacity to make judgements based on the visionary revelations she received as divine elaboration. This verse gave Mrs. White legitimacy and standing in the SDA creed and allowed her to express her opinions (and controversially the opinions of others) as near, or even above, the textual nature of the bible already fashioned by ink. Mrs. White's position in the church is likely the stem of the rumor of the church's cult-like nature, and is also the reason that some Christians see SDA Church members as having exited the theological fold of Christianity altogether.

Aside from these discrepancies, SDA beliefs are relatively average in terms of their proximity to other Protestants and Christians at large, despite the cult status often ascribed to the church by outsiders. All of the SDA church's essential beliefs can be found in other Christian denominations.

[30] Exodus 20:8-11 KJV
[31] Joel 2:28 KJV

I theorize that there are a number of interrelated factors which popularized Adventism after Catholicism in Haiti, and in particular, I find that it is largely a Christian community, if not a *missionary* community, which is most often sending aid to the Haitian people from the outside, and it happens that the SDA Church bears a long history in providing outreach to not just Haitians, but black communities who were being discriminated against 'at home' as well.

Mrs. White sought to bring 'the word' to black Americans in the southern United States, and sent her son, James Edson White, to spread the Adventist message there in 1893. He received so much backlash from pro-segregation white southerners that he built a ship, The Morningstar, from which he preached along the Mississippi River. In 1896, the church established the Oakwood Industrial School in Huntsville, Alabama, which would later become Oakwood University, a recognized HBCU which continues to function today. This outreach, pointed at a marginalized group of people who had been disenfranchised and violated by the customs and dictations of the American government, foreshadowed the humanitarian proselytizing in which the church would involve itself in around the same time. Consider the reports made by SDA missionaries in 1920:

"Haiti.—French Republic. Population, 960,000, over nine tenths negroes, the remaining tenth mulattoes. Brother Henri Williams and wife kept the Sabbath alone in Haiti for about fifteen years, having received a knowledge of it by reading our literature...

On arriving in Haiti, in the autumn of 1905, Elder W. J. Tanner found several companies of Sabbathkeepers as the result of work done by M. N. Isaac, the young school-teacher. In December of that year meetings were held in Ranquitte and Grand Riviere [the birthplace of Jean-Jacques Dessalines]*, and at Hinchea* [the birthplace of both Pedro Santana and Charlamagne Peralta], *general meeting was held, and the ordinances were celebrated for the first time in Haiti. In 1907 E. Fawer, of France, joined the Haiti staff. The progress of the truth caused the Catholic clergy to bring charges against our workers as revolutionists. The civil authorities refused to restrict our work. Sabbath-keepers, 1907, 71."*[32]

One could assume that in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the SDA church began to slowly achieve international recognition and growth partly because they preached in areas where the people were susceptible to new beliefs, particularly if said beliefs were not known to hold explicitly fringe or radical aspects—and indeed featured a woman who herself received revelation from God. The United States' occupation of the country which was unraveling at this moment and would formally last until the 1930s, followed by the father-and-son dictatorships and general political unrest towards the modern day, led to the 'aid state' we conceptualize Haiti as now. But the humanitarianism of outsiders is not only material, having only to do with posters and banners and food trucks and medical equipment, but rather it is intensely ideological as well. It seeks to influence the spirit as it seeks to influence the body—to influence function as it does form.

[32] "Outline of mission fields entered by Seventh-day Adventists," General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists Mission Board. Fourth Edition. 1920. 154; 158

Haiti's relationship to the SDA Church, Protestantism, and religious culture more generally matured quickly in the late 1980s as they approached the digital age, and thereafter quickly morphed into their contemporary nebulous yet recognizably specific formations. Slowly, as the characteristics of the SDA beliefs infiltrated groups of the Haitian populace—members of whom some would later enter diasporic conditions—a unique and formative identity developed.

"The Haitian Union of Seventh-day Adventist Church was established in March 1989 as part of the reorganization of the French-Haitian Union. The French-Haitian Union was established in 1957 and began to operate with the administrative meeting held in August 13, 1957. Its last session was held March 22, 1989, and the Haitian Union came to existence with this reorganization.

...The Haitian Union has grown a lot from two fields, the North and the South Haitian missions in 1998 to four fields by November 2009. It was comprised of the following fields: the North, Northwest, South Haitian missions, and one Conference: the Central Haitian Conference. Since July 2017, a fifth field--the Cul-De-Sac mission--was established in the city of Port-au-Prince, the capital of the country."[33]

The "specific" formations I speak of are not fixed manipulations which can easily be identified and thus exacted as socio-cultural axioms or benchmarks, but instead are more like stereotypes, much like we might come to understand the formations of Hotep[34] or the

[33] Pierre Caporal, "Haitian Union Mission," 2020. https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=DC46#fn3
[34] I am referring here to a myriad of vastly differing 'neo-Afrocentrist' ideologies and spiritual practices often grouped under this term in some African-American subcultures.

“Philly Muslims,” for example. That is to say, a group of people have adopted a particular set of religious beliefs and succeeded in adapting their cultural frameworks to their ability to live out their faith. In the way that Afrocentrism, ethnography, or Islam gave birth to new ways to conceptualize history and legacy for many African-Americans, Seventh-Day Adventism offered similar promises to many Haitians. Exploring this topic, a user on the web-platform Reddit posted the following deductions under the “How Adventism spread across the world,” forum of ‘r/exAdventist’:

“My family is Haitian and my grandparents were some of the earliest Adventists. From what I understand Adventism came to Haiti from brochures that were left on a boat. And someone found them and shared what they read. I think religion in general is complicated because it brings both good and bad. In the case of Adventism I know a lot of people have found a strong community, and strong values using it as an anchor.

Adventists in Haiti at least in the past were seen as very prestigious. In a country where 80% of the people can't read or write and speak Haitian Creole only, many Adventist churches function only in French. So Adventists kind of had a reputation of being very educated because they sold books, they read the Bible, they had people going around selling books door to door. So in my experience there has been a very snobbish attitude in certain Adventist circles. A lot of these attitudes have shifted over the years and some things that were previously unthought, like singing a Creole song from the pulpit on a Sabbath morning are commonplace now.

But the church is not just for well-to-do people in Haiti. They have built schools and hospitals, although not to the extent the Catholics have. They do bring in the less fortunate and I think a lot of less fortunate people feel good at least at first to join in some of these churches and be part of the community. Adventists also kind of stand out for the observation of the Sabbath or the nutrition messages.

Haitians can also be very superstitious; I think some of that may come from the way voodoo is practiced. I was not exposed to a lot of that and I don't believe it is necessarily evil (has good and bad like any other religions). But I have heard a lot of people who had terrible experiences with their families and religions that found support and solace in the Adventist church. As crazy or wild you may find some Adventist beliefs, they can actually seem very rational to people with other beliefs.

It's very complicated and peoples' experiences vary wildly, of course. The Haitian Adventists community today is pretty big and people convert for all kinds of reasons. I remember a woman who said she got baptized because she said it was hot so she decided to go in the water to cool off. As far as I know she never returned. I'm sure there are some people that converted because of a green card or something but you will notice some of these people stay of their own volition. Say what you want about the Adventists but they are not a mafia that will force you to stick around against your will."[35]

This assessment, from the rumor of Adventism finding its way into Haiti through brochures carried on boats, to the perceived educational gaps between Adventists and others, sheds

[35] See the comment left by user "lafranx," 2023. https://www.reddit.com/r/exAdventist/comments/16l66qd/how_adventism_spread_across_the_world/

light on the plurality of functions of ink through the religious text and out into the everyday lives of people.

Artist Naeem Mohaimen, who works primarily in film and writing, talks about the divide between the mystery of the 'old stories' which become cemented into present life. He argues for a complication and blurring of the roles of European and Non-European narratives and histories. While his films often center on Bengali histories, one should contemplate the connective tissue between Bengal and Saint Domingue, at one point the two richest colonies in the world, and forever the longest under colonial rule[36]. Mohaimen says, *"In "Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History," Susan Buck Morrs argues that the Haitian slave rebellion was the template for Hegel's master-slave concept. But references to dialectic struggle considered this the solitary invention of the German philosopher. The European and American sense of entitlement and dominance of history pivots on the idea that theirs are the stories that matter. It's a different version of a proposition Dipesh Chakrabarty made in "Provincializing Europe,"* [wherein] *Europe gets to be theory, and Non-Europe is always the practice—proof of principles already established by Europe. The enchantment of this concept can alienate you from your own context,* [leaving you] *adrift at home.*

....Museums, universities, and other institutions are now targets of critiques about decentering the canon and ending European hegemony in the production of culture and knowledge. Efforts sometimes focus on expanding, hiring non-white curators and academics, collecting works by non-Western artists, etcetera. These are necessary steps, but I wonder if they will be enough. Increasing the number of non-European protagonists is a way to disturb the status-quo, but

[36] MIT Video Productions, "Noam Chomsky and Paul Farmer on Haiti - MIT 2002 Tech Culture Forum" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjMX7QArwnw

what to do with the familiarity of stories and the strangeness of others that has settled into our bones over generations? A change of gatekeepers alone won't shift this. The English language as a global flow melds with the triumphalism of capital in projecting European and American culture as 'world culture.' Sometimes I mistake myself as part of this "we," including now when I'm reading this in English, and then realize it is because of a centuries[-long] *project of soft dominance.*

....The location of these contestations needs to be radically shifted. Expecting the Global South to always bring its narratives into the Western proscenium places reparative labor on one side and beneficiary flow on another. The imperative becomes for "we" to know equally our stories and yours—a project of twice the work. What is needed is much more entanglement between the two, not only in listening to these stories, but also in their making—not as duty, but as pleasure."[37]

What does this radical theory of pleasure-based making and historicism mean for vodou? What does this mean for Haiti's ultra-minority of Muslims and even smaller population of Jews? What does this mean for religion at large? And what could it mean for the possibilities of knowledge—not only how knowledge is produced and archived, but how it rubs up against other truths and creates problems which often bare a tinge of death? The end is always a major concern, as every religion is composed of some set of instructions concerning the preparation for death and, in the case of Christianity, the most important factor in the reality of our waking life is the death of 'the Father,' the very disappearance which in the first place allows for the existence of a 'second coming' to be expected.

[37] Naeem Mohaimen, "Midnight's Third Child," January 28, 2024. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pA2rpOs-E5A

There is a profound necropolitics involved in Haitian print which has followed it throughout its whole trajectory, from *Bib La* and even before that, onward and onward, towards and often caught in-between the surging, rage-filled waves of an ironically necrophilic ink.

Perhaps it is seeking Heaven. Perhaps it is seeking the Gardens of Eden, or the soul of a green bird who eats from the trees of Paradise, calmly awaiting the final hour. Perhaps it is seeking a return to nature, whatever such a reincarnation may look like. Or perhaps it is seeking *Ginen*, a mystical land beyond this worldly realm which, in the Haitian tradition, is the final resting place of the enslaved Africans whose lives were taken in vain all along the Middle Passage.

The Creole word Ginen is likely derived from the word for the land of 'Guinea', a term also used to mean greater West Africa, although it has also been associated with the Berber word 'Gnawa,' meaning 'black peoples'. Ginen is a transcendental motherland in the afterlife, an eternal home for the would-have-been-Haitian ancestors to whom entropy owes solace. Ginen is a time-space which represents the pleasure of death, and hence allows those who understand it as a loose computational system to program joy and honor into the horrific and bewildering natural process of ceasing to exist as defined, composite material, thus transforming it. It prevents one from dying in vain; it imparts a raison d'etre and is the metaphysical landscape to which the practice of Vodou is reliant, as it solidifies the African origins of Haiti's unique customs.

The Arabic word 'Jinan' (جنان) is one of two forms of the plural for "Paradise," (the original dwelling of the first humans, Adam and Eve, in the Abrahamic tradition) and is also the site of the eternity that Muslims look forward to after the worldly life, death, Al-Barzakh (the life of the grave), Ba'ath (resurrection) and Al-Mizan (when the "scales" carrying good and bad deeds are weighed against one another). The term Jinan is derived from the base root 'jann', (جن) which means "to cover or conceal." A notable example of the usage of this word in the Arabic language is in the aforementioned chapter of the Quran, Al-An'am (الأنعام) (The Cattle) in verse 74, when it is used in reference to the action of the night's darkness 'covering' the scene, *"When the night grew dark* [literally: "when the night covered,"] *upon him* [Abraham], *he saw a star and said, "This is my Lord!" But when it set, he said, "I do not love things that set."*[38] Here we see the father of the Abrahamic faiths for whom they are named—the originator of the 'people of the book,'[39] in a moment of deep meditation, reflecting on the enormity of the cosmic world, beckoning its grand stratifications in order to feel some semblance of the *sacred,* eternalized in ink as the holiest metaphysical journey—the search for monotheism, or monism; a stem of the desire for oneness and absoluteness of the same genre notably inherent to the space-time of necro-phenomena. It is not unlike the phenomenological theory of 'wahdat-al-wujood' (The Unity of Oneness) (وحدة الوجود) proposed by Islamic scholars centuries ago, the Kabbalistic concept of 'gilgul' (reincarnation) (גלגול), or the Judeo-Christian 'shekhinah' (dwelling) (שכינה), which all

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[38] فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ ٱلَّيْلُ رَءَا كَوْكَبًا ۖ قَالَ هَٰذَا رَبِّى ۖ فَلَمَّآ أَفَلَ قَالَ لَآ أُحِبُّ ٱلْـَٰٔفِلِينَ

(Quran, 6:74) Translation from Dr. Mustafa Khattab's "The Clear Quran: A Thematic English Translation." Book of Signs Foundation, 2016. https://quran.com/al-anam/74

(Note: Around 2020, the popular digitized Quran website quran.com changed its official (/default) translation from the coveted 1997 Sahih International translation to Dr. Khattab's newer translation).

[39] This term is used by Muslims to distinguish Jews and Christians (People of the Book) from polytheists and infidels.

suggest a geomorphic relationship to reality and the absolute, seeing all forms of existence as singular, separated only the way one might separate the parts of a fruit, or the architectural components of a house.

And consider then ‘sevi lwa’ (“serving the spirits”) in the Vodou tradition, which suggests a distinct belief in a necessary reciprocity—rather than *service* as it is typically understood—between the self and the sacred metaphysical other, achieved through rituals and other practices, which can be connected to the polytheistic religions of the pre-Islamic Arabs. Some of the early converts to Islam were known to worship a sculptural deity made of dates and fat (Hais), which would sometimes be eaten during times of famine and replenished in times of harvest—a paradoxical God[40]. All of these conceptions of death and the sacred overlap with and without each other's awareness or response, and cannot have more to do with the problematics of ink than they already do today.

40

حدثنا علي بن حجر أخبرنا شريك عن سماك عن جابر بن سمرة قال جالست النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أكثر من مائة مرة فكان أصحابه يتناشدون الشعر ويتذاكرون أشياء من أمر الجاهلية وهو ساكت فربما تبسم معهم
قوله :...(ويتذاكرون أشياء من أمر الجاهلية إلخ) وفي رواية مسلم : ... ومن جملة ما يتحدثون به أنه قال واحد : ما نفع أحدا صنمه مثل ما نفعني ، قالوا كيف هذا ؟ قال صنعته من الحيس فجاء القحط فكنت آكله يوما فيوما

تحفة الأحوذي بشرح جامع الترمذي - محمد بن عبد الرحمن بن عبد الرحيم المباركفوري
جزء 8 صفحة 115 (#2850)

"Jabir ibn Samura said ‘I sat with the Prophet over one hundred times, and his companions would recite poetry and remind one another of their pre-Islamic ignorance; sometimes he would be silent and sometimes he would smile with them.’

...And there comes a narration in [The Book of Imam] Muslim, [in which] someone said, ‘nobody’s idol benefitted them as much as mine,’ to which they said ‘how is that?’ He said, “I made it out of Hais, but then came hunger, so I would eat it day by day.’”

Al Mubarakfuri, Tuhfatul Ahwadhi bi Sharh Jami’ At Tirmidhi (a book written to accompany the prophetic narrations found in a famous Sunni anthology, roughly interpreted as “Gift of the Determinant in Explaining the Collection of Imam Tirmidhi”), vol. 8, pp. 115, #2850 (my translations)

Ginen/Jinan, as an ideological framework, conflates life and afterlife (physical space) with a terminology (literary space) which stands as a representation of an idea (conceptual space), performing a process not unlike that of ink, as a kind of Rihla (a pilgrimage or travel journal). In order to get “there” (Ginen/Jinan), one first must endure “here” (earth). Mortal existence is reduced to a conduit through which the everlasting can be obtained (or ordained). This endurance is characteristic of all parts of this pseudo-historical project, and treats death as an incumbent element of existence. (*This, too, shall pass*).

Ink is a cannibalistic, purging bulemic. It is characterized by its Sisyphusian nature and physique—a cluster of interlocking rings, each an ouroboros of its own unique design, a result of its own perfect self-conception. Its scaly, slimy limbs fold into one another unceasingly, like grease-covered and geared components of a machine, until the whole structure fails, falling weightlessly into mess-making convulsions. It is a fantastically disastrous ratking of information, exhausted by even these very words.

A Chronology of Haitian Print Culture

1a. 1750 - 1800

As is the case with any system, it is important to set margins and logical parameters in order not to confuse the purpose of this economic chronology with a linear account of history. We have established ink as an independent entity which has embarked on a life-long journey towards a fearless goal, and that goal is a coming-to-terms with death through a sense of an eventuating infinitude, which manifests as a reincarnation or resurrection, Ginen/Jinan.

One could choose any varying number of decades to begin to speak about the trajectory of Haiti's print history; the writings of Columbus, or de las Casas after him—perhaps even the esoteric and untraceable poetry of Anacaona. Erin Zavitz starts on the first of January, 1804, as under the rule of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, *"government secretaries and printers began the process of establishing national publishing houses with former French printing presses…to counter the racialized images of Haiti and make Afro Americans people in the eyes of Enlightenment Europe."*[41]

But what is there to be done with those extensive hoardings of marginalia, the notes, journal entries, letters, maps, drawings, calculations, and indeed print media which surround that context? What is to be done with the contemporary authorship which reaches back into the archive, following closely the non-linear rhythm of ink's venture—whether they be with the demarcating lines of Haiti, or Saint Domingue, or Santo Domingo, or anywhere else? A gap

[41] Erin Zavitz "Revolutionary narrations: Early Haitian historiography and the challenge of writing counter-history," 2017. *Atlantic Studies*, 14:3, 336, DOI: 10.1080/14788810.2017.1329578

in the historical record is no less than a theatrical stage ripe for the projection of speculations.

One could begin from the documents of early Santo Domingo, finding that the seeds of a revolutionary literary culture were being sown early on, left to hibernate in the depths of the archive so that the Maroons could be praised in the modern day:

"As early as 1681, before the colony had passed from the Spanish to the French and at a time when there were as many indentured whites as Africans, with a total population of only six thousand, Maroonage was already an acknowledged threat. Two years before, in one of the earliest documented revolts, a slave named Padrejean had killed his master, recruited a band of twenty Africans, and embarked on his goal of strangling every white in the land. The revolt failed, but it was the type of incident that drew the attention of the king and led to the royal edict of 1685, a law that among other injunctions specified that a captured marron have his ears cut off and a shoulder branded with a fleur-de-lys; should the offense be repeated the hamstrings would be cut and a second brand applied to the other shoulder. The publication of this decree was an indication of the growing concern among the free whites, a fear that would become hysteria as the population of slaves soared."[42]

A century after Padrejean's rebellion and ones like it, such as the resistance acts of Francois Mackandal, the revolution appeared clearly imminent; and ink, as a non-neutral agent, professed this conjuring valiance in both the everyday media and undergirding private papers alike:

[42] Wade Davis, "The Serpent and the Rainbow: A Harvard Scientist's Astonishing Journey into the Secret Society of Haitian Voodoo, Zombis, and Magic," 1985. Simon and Schuster, New York. pp 200

"By 1770, according to a contemporary report, the number of maroons had increased to such proportions that "security became non existent" and it was unwise to wander alone in the hills…Between the years 1764 and 1793 for example, newspaper advertisements alone indicate some forty-eight thousand cases of Maroonage…a large percentage of those [French] who did flee had not lived in the colony more than a year, and many virtually escaped off the docks. One colonial document covering a single port for a fifteen-day period in January of 1786 lists 43 new slaves escaped or recaptured. In 1788, out of 10,753 slaves disembarked over a ten-month period at Cap Francis, more than 2000 got away…. Behind a veil of secrecy that…allowed them to survive, these Maroon communities developed genuine political, economic, and religious systems of their own…. These were men of royal blood, often educated not just by their own oral traditions but by Arab teachers,…[men] with intelligence, moral vigor, and the call of a militant tradition."[43]

These Maroon men, as Davis elaborates, were descendants of a literary tradition that began already in Africa, one that had already been culminating for long years prior to their enslavement. A major aspect of Western colonialism is that it seeks to erase, completely or partially, the very essential components of the native culture and self-determination, as the capacity of the enslaved person to believe and act on their own behalf negates the idea that the enslaved is in need of the guidance and subjugation of a master, hence negating in turn the contestable missionary cause of Catholic origin. In order to subvert the incumbent retaliation of the master, the ink of the Maroons upended itself from the historical record early on in its existence, functioning much like Ginen/Jinan—an ideal form (a deep object) rendered unattainable by the throes of time:

[43] Ibid

"In 1786 an informant reported clandestine meetings of two hundred or more slaves being held on the plantations. A contemporary document states "a great deal has been said of slave superstitions and of their secret organizations, and the scheming and crimes for which they provided pretext—posionings, infanticide—...whites were not admitted to these secret meetings, and legal documentation was usually held secret or destroyed.""[44]

Even given that the mystical nature of these events and their material grant credence to Ginen/Jinan, it is important to note that the negative space created by the self-cannibalism enacted by the ink of the secret document bears virulent repercussions. The lack of present textual evidence from the hands of the Maroons themselves gives headway to the dominant history, albeit with a complexity which is resolved through reclamatory appropriation.

In the middle to late 1750s, white plantation owner Duvivier de la Mahautière authored the oft-cited "first work of Kreyòl literature," a poem titled *Lisette quitté la plaine*[45], written to be accompanied by the would-have-been recently written instrumental backing of the popular French poem *Les Tendres Souhaits (Gentle Wishes)* (known by its first line, *Que ne suis-je la fougère* or *"Why am I not the fern,"*) composed by either Italian singer Antoine Albanèse or composer and multi-instrumentalist Giovanni Battista Pergolesi.

Taken as Haitian literature, *Lisette* presents a number of problems. First, it is the work of a French colonist, and is thus already inherently antithetical to the revolutionary aspirations for which ink harbors potential. There is no world, imaginary or otherwise, in which de la Mahautière could come to comprehend the mind-state of the Haitians whose lives he

[44] Ibid. pp 201
[45] La plaine refers to an area of colonial Saint Domingue.

usurped and objectified, no matter how ‘humanizing’ or ‘pro-abolition’ his words may look or sound.

Second, while its age and other mitigating circumstances should be concerned, it suffices to say that the Kreyòl of de la Mahautière is not a Haitian one. I do not mean this merely as it involves the fact that the orthography and general standardization of Kreyòl was only a prototypical one in the 18th century, but also as it concerns the author’s biographical history. Despite having cognitive awareness of the existence and outward being of the Haitian people and some of the ongoings of their lives, his French tongue would never formulate a Kreyòl sentence or indeed utter it without only approximating its essence. In other words, part of Kreyòl is its Kreyòl-ness—it’s Haitian-ness.

The poem is supposed to convey, from his own point of view, the inward emotional surges experienced by an enslaved African man in Saint Domingue as he suffers the woeful dread of having his lover, an enslaved woman, taken away from him to live at another plantation. The poem has been explained by some critics as the work of a white landowner who is given no choice but to conceal his love for an enslaved woman, performing a kind of narrative blackface in which his “scandalous” fantasy can be expressed.[46] Others have relegated *Lisette* to the extinct era of ‘mulatto’ gentlemen who amused “idle, rich, colonial women,” who in turn sadistically “flattered their mistresses” with the songs.[47]

[46] George Lang. “A Primer of Haitian Literature in "Kreyòl," *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 35, No. 2, Haiti, 1804-2004: Literature, Culture, and Art (Summer, 2004), p. 131
[47] Ibid

De la Mahautière writes, *"Quand moin contré lautt négress / Moin pas gagné zié pou li;"*[48] and I cannot help but imagine his position as one who deals in the trade of selling, buying, and torturing live human beings to procure profits—regardless of the contextual elements of the colony in which he was residing.

And perhaps most plainly, it is simply a French poem told through Creolized fiction. It uses an ABAB rhyme scheme and refrain; it is reminiscent of the rondel or virelai which had long gained footing in the Francophone tradition of verse. *Lisette* fails to represent the complexity and intricacy of the Haitian literature which was to follow it. Later, famed philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau would write his own version of *Lisette* which he dubbed *Chanson Nègre.*[49] It is important to recognize de la Mahautière and those like him as writers who engaged in cosplay, not homage.

As comparative literature specialist George Lang mentions, the Martiniquan scholar and linguist Jean Bernabé has offered the best indexical categorization for this type of marginalia, coining *Lisette* and its siblings as pieces of "pre-literary" Kreyòl, relics of an era in which the Haitian literary tradition was yet more ephemeral than physical.[50]

But the *Lisette* of old died once it reached the hands and voices of those whose stories it cheaply attempted to profess. In 1902, Clara Gottschalk Peterson, an Philadelphian writer and musician whose family owned slaves, published a musical anthology titled "Creole

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[48] "Quand je rencontre une autre négresse / Je n'ai pas d'yeux pour elle," ("When I meet another black woman / I don't have eyes for her.") It should be noted here that the term *négresse* did not carry the negative associations or racist connotations at the time of de la Mahautière's poem.
[49] https://opac.rism.info/id/rismid/rism400216196?sid=33666897
[50] George Lang. "A Primer of Haitian Literature in "Kreyòl," *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 35, No. 2, Haiti, 1804-2004: Literature, Culture, and Art (Summer, 2004), p. 131

songs from New Orleans in the negro-dialect,"[51] which featured a version transcribed from memory called *Zélim to quitté la plaine.* Then, at least eighteen years later, the Haitian pianist and composer Ludovic Lamothe would write the first Haitian *Lisette*[52]*,* a version which is notably set to a take on traditional méringue, one that Haitian philosopher Jean Price Mars encouraged and lauded.[53] It took about the same amount of time for the "Louisiana Lady" Camille Lucie Nickerson to arrange her 1942 *Lizette, ma chêre amie,* which has a more drawn out, melancholic feeling. Nickerson, a professor and ethnographer amongst other roles, was not Haitian, but spent her youth between Philadelphia and Port-au-Prince, and went on to study, arrange, and publish numerous Creole tunes.

I use *Lisette* and all of its variable and sometimes seemingly contradictory forms to demonstrate the self-actualizing generative manipulations undertaken by ink through time. The transmissions *Lisette* underwent (and undergoes[54]) is not unlike those of the chromolithographs of the saints which become objects warranting the reverence one might afford a holy book or a relic fixed to an altar.

Though perhaps it could be said that not all print objects carry such triumphant legacies, and that the historicities of some of them are just that. These kinds of 'top-down' transmissions can appear enriching at their surface-levels, yet adequately represent the politics of their referents. Looking back into the historical record of the 1790s, for example, one will find countless journal entries and letters sent between prominent American

[51] https://search.worldcat.org/title/12940515
[52] https://www.lisetteproject.org/post/lisette-c-1929-by-ludovic-lamothe-1882-1953
[53] Jean Price-Mars et Maryse Condé, Ainsi parla l'oncle (Montréal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2009 [1928]); Jean Price-Mars, So Spoke the Uncle, trans. by Magdaline W. Shannon (Washington, DC: *Three Continents Press*, 1983 [1928]), 28–31, 236.
[54] See https://www.lisetteproject.org/

politicians of the age which recount the Quasi War. Here we can track a pattern of recognitions which palpably delineate between the salient layers of selfhood and otherness which draw a picture of the relations between France, colonial America, and a newly independent Haiti which had recently declared autonomous self-governance.

A letter from Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, sent on the 23rd of January 1799, reads, *"A clause in a bill now under debate for opening commerce with Toussaint & his black subjects now in open rebellion against France, will be a circumstance of high aggravation to that country, and in addition to our cruising round their islands will put their patience to a great proof. one fortunate circumstance is that, annihilated as they are on the ocean, they cannot get at us for some time, and this will give room for the popular sentiment to correct the imprudence. nothing is believed of the stories about Buonaparte.*[55] *those about Ireland have a more serious aspect."*[56]

In this letter and ones like it shared between Thomas Jefferson, Aaron Burr, and their ilk, the hierarchy set up in the American political psyche posits Haiti and France as two pawns

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[55]His given birth name was Napoleone di Buonaparte, and 1796, at the age of 27 he Gallicized his name to Napoléon Bonaparte, "emphasizing his French characteristics over his Italian and Corsican identities" (Roberts, Andrew. Napoleon: A Life. New York: *Penguin Random House*, 2015. Selin, Shannon (Author of Napoleon in America). "10 Myths About Napoleon Bonaparte." Shannon Selin, shannonselin.com/.

[56] https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-30-02-0442
The footnote to this section reads, "The clause … for opening commerce with toussaint was part of a bill "further to suspend" trade with France by continuing the provisions of the act of 13 June 1798 (see TJ to Madison, 31 May 1798). A section in the new bill would have allowed the president to exempt from restrictions on trade any part of the French Republic in which claimants to authority "shall clearly disavow, and shall be found to refrain from the aggressions, depredations, and hostilities" of France against American property and ships. In the House of Representatives on 22 Jan., Gallatin argued that although the provision was not couched in such terms it was meant to strike at France by endorsing and aiding the Haitian independence movement led by Toussaint-Louverture. In order to carry this line of reasoning, Gallatin argued that the independence of Saint-Domingue would be "a very problematical event." After further debate, on the 24th John Nicholas's motion to strike that portion of the bill failed, 55 to 35. The bill passed the House on 28 Jan. and became law on 9 Feb. In its final form the act did not specify conditions but simply gave the president discretion to lift restrictions on trade with any possession of the French Republic (Annals, 9:2747–53, 2768, 2791–2; U.S. Statutes at Large, 1:613–16).

in the geographically diverse scruple for land and capital, Haiti being conceptualized as the child of two separated parents whose well-being can be employed as leverage during court battles. The Haitian Revolution, up to this moment, had been well cataloged in American newspapers, especially in Philadelphia, and was thus no ideological stranger in the social realm at this point. Amidst the fear that American politicians faced as they became neighbors to a formerly enslaved Island nation who fought for their own self-determination and won—a new government which not only inspired those enslaved in the United States but went as far as to purchase enslaved individuals simply to grant them their freedom—America was forced to make grand concessions which, purposefully or not, recognized the legitimacy of the then infant Haitian rulership.

Throughout the 1790s and early 1800s, an influx of white refugees flooded into American states such as New York and Pennsylvania, seeking to escape the issues they caused in Haiti. This came after they failed to implement pushback against the revolt, funded by a sizable stipend of $700,000 of American money granted to the slave owners by Thomas Jefferson—the first account of US foreign aid in history. *"The refugees became involved in [immigrant] politics, hoping to influence U.S. foreign policy. Anxieties about their actions, along with those of European radicals also residing in the United States, led to the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts."*[57] [58] It is in this literary climate in which what might be said to be

[57]https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/nr/91724.htm#:~:text=Jefferson%20refused%20to%20recognize%20Haitian,as%20a%20sovereign%2C%20independent%20nation.

[58] These were four congruent laws passed by the United States government in 1798: The Naturalization Act, which stipulated that in order to ascertain citizenship, a person must be a resident of the US for 14 years, an increase from the former 5-year requirement; The Alien Friends Act, which granted the president (John Adams) liberty to put "non-citizens" in jail or to condemn them to deportation; The Alien Enemies Act, which is an extension of the aforementioned law, granted the president the ability to prosecute "non-citizens" amidst wartime; and The Sedition Act, which officially criminalized publishing false or malicious information concerning the federal government of the US. Three of these laws were repealed by the year 1802, but the Alien Enemies Act is still in effect today. Former US President Trump has threatened to uphold this law in order to facilitate mass deportations.

some of the first publicly available Haitian governmental documents were being drafted, printed, and sent off to the masses.

It is well-known that Dessalines was aided by countless individuals from Haiti's varying inhabitants, and that, in fact, part of his goal in the liberatory effort was to eradicate the castes and racial hierarchies which the Europeans had long made commonplace in the colonies. Many of these figures maintain rumored connections to the Islamic faith, much to the dismay of certain historians who are overly focused on upholding a linear trajectory akin to what we might find in western narratives. Rodney Salnave, for example, has an entire section of his online blog dedicated to challenging the idea that early Haitian figures may have had backgrounds which cross-pollinated with eastern philosophies, particularly Islam. I am not interested in "debunking" anything.

Instead, enter here two major figures of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti's early literary tradition who have almost become almost mystical apocrypha, Dutty Boukman and Cécile Fatiman. Boukman was born in modern-day Senegal/Gambia and brought to the Caribbean as a slave after receiving an Islamic education in his homeland, much like Omar bin Saeed, another Senegalese scholar and polymath who was enslaved in the United States around the same time. Boukman's revolts and martyrdom came directly after that of figures such as Vincent Ogé, a mixed-race member of the Haitian elite who, like many other Haitians in his position, were angered by the March 1790 decrees which bid to take power away from black Haitians and strengthen French rule. Before Ogé's revolt, he had discussed the nature of the inequality in Haiti with and attempted to draw support from abolitionists such as Thomas Clarkson but his demands to the French were denied, inspiring other free and enslaved

black persons like Boukman and his contemporaries. Some contemporary scholars, namely Sylviane Anna Diouf and Sylviane Kamara, famously (and somewhat controversially) theorize that "Boukman" is a nickname with origins in Islamic culture[59], and by some accounts he was even known to be an Imam (Muslim cleric). Others have noted Boukman's participation in and organization around vodou ceremonies as a houngan (Vodou priest), perhaps suggesting that Boukman's spiritual practices were more syncretic and fluid than having been derived from a single origin. As scholar Aisha Khan said about Boukman's theology, *"the messiness of lived experience and of commemoration typically belies categorical summaries."*[60] Regardless, a number of assertions about him have been verified, including his close partnership and collaborative efforts with revolutionaries the likeness of Dessalines, Jeannot Bullet, Georges Biassou, and Cécile Fatiman.

Fatiman was a mambo (Vodou priestess) whose familial origins are heavily debated amongst historians, with some mentioning that she had royal ancestry, and others noting that the name "Fatiman," (itself subject to scholarly disputes) should suggest her West African Muslim derivation. Not only her name and ethnic makeup, but indeed the whole of Fatiman's life story has been constructed through atypical methods, relying heavily on oral accounts due the absence of archival writing on her. Her spirit evaded and surpassed the clutches of the historical record and transcended into a socially-constituted metaphysics. Khan describes Fatiman's philosophy as one which is strongly connected to the body,

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[59] Sylviane Anna Diouf & Sylviane Kamara. "Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas." (1998). *New York University Press*. p. 153.

"It is likely that Boukman was a Jamaican Muslim who had a Quran, and that he got his nickname from this. As many Muslims had done, and would continue to do, he had climbed the echelons of the slaves' power structure and had reached the top. He was a trusted, professional slave."

[60] Aisha Khan, "Realising a Muslim Atlantic," 2020. https://themaydan.com/2020/07/realising-a-muslim-atlantic/

understanding the physical form as a site of political action.[61] Fatiman was a godmother of the revolution. She was in fact the one who commanded those taking part in the revolt to give their allegiance to Boukman and honor him as commander-in-chief.[62]

Fatiman is just one of the many women who were major contributors to the Haitian struggle, often overshadowed by the grand narratives usually saved for their male counterparts. Thus, many of the accounts of the lives of these women bear uncertainties or near total erasure in some cases. Through the work of many contemporary scholars, many of whom are female-identifying themselves, we construct and fortify their stories. **"***The most vociferous and resolute type of protest was the refusal of night work. On the Coderc plantation, two female workers ordered by the administrative council to work the night shift categorically refused; one of the women, Guittone, threatened the conducteur [driver], adding insult to injury, and told him that if there were any night work to be done, he would have to do it alone.***"**[63]

Through the documented oral histories, the women who were the at once the backbone and orchestrators of the early revolution come to life, their actions towards liberation—actions often as difficult as they were loving—pose like material through which we might imagine them:

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[61] Finch, Aisha K. (2020). "Cécile Fatiman and Petra Carabalí, Late Eighteenth-Century Haiti and Mid-Nineteenth-Century Cuba". In Ball, Erica L.; Seijas, Tatiana; Snyder, Terri L. (eds.). As If She Were Free: A Collective Biography of Women and Emancipation in the Americas. *Cambridge University Press*. pp. 293–311.
[62] Watkins, Angela Denise (2014). Mambos, Priestesses, and Goddesses: Spiritual Healing Through Vodou in Black Women's Narratives of Haiti and New Orleans (PhD). *University of Iowa*. doi:10.5840/jcr20214439.
[63] Jayne Boisvert, "Colonial Hell and Female Slave Resistance in Saint-Domingue," *Journal of Haitian Studies*, Spring 2001, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring 2001), pp. 61-76

“White slave owners blamed enslaved black women if the women failed to become pregnant, yet these same owners did almost nothing to relieve the slave mother of her duties so that she could care for her children. Fouchard tells of a case in the village of Gros Morne where the Negro woman Véronique belonging to Mr. Galat gave birth to triplets. They didn't get a wet nurse to help the mother..."They trained she-goats who are so attuned to the slightest cry of the children that they come running and vie with one another to suckle the babies. The Negro woman only nurses them at night.""[64]

[64] Ibid p. 66

Fig 3.[65]

ST. DOMINGO.

The following Proclamation of the independence of the Island of St.-Domingo, has been published by the three principal Military Chiefs:

PROCLAMATION OF DESSALINES, CHRISTOPHE, AND TIERVEAUX, CHIEFS OF ST. DOMINGO.

In the name of the Black People and Men of Colour of St. Domingo.

The independence of St. Domingo is proclaimed. Restored to our primitive dignity, we have proclaimed our rights; we swear never to yield them to any power on earth: the frightful veil of prejudice is torn to pieces, and is so for ever. Woe be to whatsoever would dare again to put together its bloody intrigues.

O! Landholders of St. Domingo, wandering in foreign countries, by proclaiming our independence, we do not intend to forbid you, indiscriminately from returning to your property; far be from us this unjust idea. We are not ignorant, that there are some among you that have renounced their old errors, abjured the injustice of their exorbitant pretensions, and acknowledged the lawfulness of the cause for which we have been spilling our blood these twelve years. Toward these men who do us justice, we will act as brothers; let them rely for ever on our esteem and friendship; let them return among us. The God who protects the Cause of Freemen, bids us to stretch out towards them our conquering arms. But as for those who, intoxicated with foolish pride, and interested slaves of a guilty pretension, are blinded so much as to think that they are the essence of human nature, and affect to believe that they are destined by heaven to be our masters and our tyrants, let them never come near the land of St. Domingo; if they come hither, they will only meet with chains and deportation; let them stay then where they are; and terrified by their well-deserved misery, and the frowns of the just men that they have too long mocked at, let them still continue to move the pity and concern of nobody.

We have sworn not to listen to clemency towards all those who would dare to speak to us of slavery; we shall be inexorable, perhaps even cruel towards all the troops who, themselves forgetting the object for which they have not ceased fighting since 1780, should come yet from Europe to carry among us death and servitude. Nothing is too dear, and every means are lawful, to men from whom it is wished to tear the first of all blessings. Were they to cause rivers and torrents of blood to run; were they, in order to maintain their liberty, to conflagrate seven-eighths of the globe, they are innocent before the tribunal of Providence, that has not created men to see them groaning under a harsh and shameful servitude.

If in the various insurrections that took place, some inhabitants against whom we had not to complain, have been victims of the cruelty of a few soldiers or cultivators too much blinded by the remembrance of their past sufferings to be able to distinguish the good and humane land-owners from those that were cruel and cruel. we lament with all feeling souls so deplorable an end, and declare to the world, whatever may be said to the contrary by wicked people, that the murders were committed contrary to the wishes of our hearts. It was impossible, especially in the crisis in which the colony was, to be able to prevent or stop these horrors. They who are in the least acquainted with history, all know that a people, when agitated by civil dissentions, though they may be the most polished on earth, give themselves up to all kinds of excess, and the authority of the chiefs, always but poorly consolidated in a time of revolution, cannot punish all those that are guilty, without always meeting with new difficulties. But now-a-days the Aurora of peace lets us have the presage of a less stormy time; now that the calm of victory has succeeded to the trouble of a dreadful war, every thing in St. Domingo ought to assume a new face, and its Government henceforward to be that of justice.

Done at the Head-quarters, Fort Dauphin, Nov. 29, 1803.

(Signed) DESSALINES,
CHRISTOPHE,
CLERVEAUX.

(True Copy) B. AMIE, Sec.

29 November 1803 Haitian Declaration of Independence as it appeared in English translation in London in the 6 February 1804 edition of *The Times*.

It is not without these whose names we often fail to remember—without whom ink's lifespans would be cut short time after time again—not without Empress Marie-Claire Heureuse Félicité Bonheur, Empress of Haiti, the wife of Dessalines who mothered seven of his children *during* the revolution, who organized and administered aid when a siege was led against the people of Jacmel; not without Lieutenant Suzanne "Sanité" Bélair, who, with a heart of steel, gave herself to the cause and reached martyrdom alongside her husband Charles, honorably requesting that she be executed by a firing squad just as he would be; not

[65] *The Times*, Monday, Feb 06, 1804; pg. 3; Issue 5938; col F St. Domingo.
https://haitidoi.com/2013/03/03/the-29-november-1803-declaration-of-independence-post-by-david-geggus/

without Dédée Bazile, the vivandière who collected and properly buried the remains of Dessalines' body after his assasination; and not without Marie-Jeanne Lamartinière, who fought courageously alongside her husband in the Armée Indigène, deemed the quintessential figure of the femme soldier and thus often called the "Joan of Arc of Haiti."

Even the white women of European descent whose support for the equality of the Haitian people amongst all others can be said to be deeply flawed and wholly incomplete owe something to this history. Olympe de Gouges, for example, born into a wealthy French family and acculturated into high class society, authored her controversial play "L'Esclavage des Noirs" (Black Slavery) in 1785, and later a pamphlet titled "Réflexions sur les hommes nègres" (Reflections on Black Men) in 1788, the former for which she was blamed for the inciting the 1791 revolts in Saint Domingue.[66] Though I have not been able to verify its source, the rumored statement about her uttered by famed French actor Abraham-Joseph Bénard, better known as Fleury, exemplifies the opinion most held of her, *"Mme de Gouges is one of those women to whom one feels like giving razor blades as a present, who through their pretensions lose the charming qualities of their sex... Every woman author is in a false position, regardless of her talent."* She would eventually be executed on the guillotine, but not for either of these articles, nor her most famous writings on feminism, but for her political alignment with the Gironde. Although de Gouges was a general supporter of human equality as a part of her larger universalist project, she was unable to comprehend on a deep level how such changes were to be made. She denounced the aforementioned revolts and seemed to truly believe that violence was not only unjustifiable in the case of the Haitian people but that it 'served to prove the point' of the French ruling-class who often

[66] Lisa Gålmark (2020). Rosewater of the Revolution: *Olympe de Gouges Feminist Humanism*. Dela förlag. p. 41

cited the supposed barbarism of black and brown peoples so as to dehumanize them. She failed to see that the violence was always already there.

Perhaps part of de Gouges' inability to philosophically (or emotionally) moralize the Haitian resistance stems from the essential problem of distance, the material and psychological obstacle that ink and the professions associated with it frequently face. But the distance was not only happening between Haiti and France, but in fact Haiti and the world, just as it is today.

In the late 1790s, *"Americans in the new United States followed the events in Saint Domingue with anxious interest. Since the southern states relied on thousands of slaves to work their plantations, a slave revolt in the world's richest plantation colony was bound to excite their concern. In addition, when white settlers began fleeing Saint Domingue, many of them came to the United States. Newspapers in the United States published letters offering eyewitness accounts (and rumors) about the uprising."*[67]

While we will see the overlaps of many cultural elements through this paper, it should be made clear that this was already long underway before there was any semblance of a Haitian literary culture like the ones that exists at the time of writing this. Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken, professor of Caribbean and postcolonial literatures in French at CUNY, writes,

[67] https://revolution.chnm.org/exhibits/show/liberty--equality--fraternity/slavery-and-the-haitian-revolu

"As Buck-Morss indicates in her book Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History, the Haitian Revolution was a result of the confluence of multiple philosophical systems: African (especially Islamic West African thought) and European enlightenment philosophy. For Buck Morss, Freemasonry in Europe and North America, and meetings amongst Africans in the Caribbean, served the same role in the Americas: as the intellectuals of their communities, whether Vodou high priest, gens de couleur, soldier, mason, or new citizens, both forums were places to exchange and transmit knowledge that came from hybrid sources: Africa, Europe, and the Americas."[68]

Let history be no stranger to her late relative, the present.

[68] Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken, "Spirit Possession in French, Haitian, and Vodou Thought: An Intellectual History." Lanham MD: *Lexington Books*, 2014. p. 276

Letters to Josias

December 13, 2024

Dear Josias,

I am writing this letter preemptively, in advance of knowing you. I hope it finds you in good health and high spirits.

My name is Zaid. I am a student finishing my undergraduate studies in an arts program at a university in New York City. My grandmother moved here from Haiti when my mom was young. I've never been to Haiti—not yet. I think about it all the time, though. Growing up, I always thought of Haiti as a magical and sacred far away land where a big part of my family came from. I didn't quite understand the reasons for which I wouldn't ever get to go see it in real life. Now, I try to look for new ways to experience and engage with Haiti.

I came across the website for 2nd Story Goods, the company for which you produce screen prints. There's a section on there that mentions your DIY emulsion transferring process, and how you were the first screen printer to start working with them. It's excellent work, Josias. I noticed that a lot of the printing you do features simple text—a word or a phrase—which becomes a kind of mantra or reminder. When I first moved to New York for school, I was trying to figure out how to make art, since I had only worked in relatively direct language and instructional scores before that. I wrote a lot of poetry and had previously wanted to study linguistics, and still had admiration for those topics. I decided to work on experimenting with the parts of language in different ways, whether thought (imagined),

spoken, written, printed, or otherwise manifest. I made sculptures, drawings, and photographs mostly, but all dealing with language as a kind of material.

I think you are a perfect collaborator for my current project. For a couple years now I've been thinking about the mitigating factors which contribute to my inability to travel to Haiti and vice versa. For one, I am obsessed with the unsettling fact of displacement. Josias, I don't know where exactly I should be. Do you ever feel that sometimes?

I realize that the distance between me and you has been in part created by major institutions, in the broadest meaning of the term: governments and militaries and corporations and independent actors and more. I think about the United Nations a lot, as it positions itself in the international context as a daddy-like figure, making concessions and contradictions as are necessary to upkeep its parental dominance. I think about its supposed neutrality and desire to serve a somewhat universal population.

When UN soldiers participate in aid missions, they are given little commemorative medals, rectangular badges of steel wrapped in dyed ribbon, forming vertical color-strips that resemble flags or abstract paintings. These ribbons are a lot like language; that is, they are little symbols representing bigger concepts and ideas we connect to our experiences of them, like letters or icons. They are also deeply related to our fields, art and design, since that is the first step in their creation. There is someone who must conceive of these controlled compositions and ascribe (or prescribe) meanings to them, which we can either accept or reject, but which are regardless wholly part of the way we experience and recognize them.

But at the same time, we would be inventing something completely new by working together to invent a new relationship between ourselves and the rest of the world through the colors on the ribbons. As printed objects, the color fields are merely a referent to the medals, augmented to adjust their relationship to language and authority. I think language and authority have a lot to do with printing.

I would love to see your printing studio and process someday. Thank you for continuing to keep creativity alive and well in Gonaives, monsieur.

Yours,

ZA

December 30, 2024

Dear Josias,

It is cold and wet here these days. When I walk from my apartment to the subway in the morning, the wind against my cheeks is like a thousand pins of ice bracing them in big wave-like motions; and yet, sometimes I like it. Salty tears run down my face, especially when it's sunny outside, and start to freeze into my pores. My boots get soggy.

I wonder what the weather is like in Gonaives? How is it working in your studio? What do you listen to while you print? Do you do fun things afterwards or before? Do you go to the beach? Maybe that's a funny question. We have beaches in New York, but it's not the same as yours. My grandmother lives even further up than I do, near Canada. I would visit her sometimes when I was younger, and we would go to the beach on cloudy days. She would make us a stew called gumbo, which you would love—if you haven't had it.

I'm going to New Jersey, the state neighboring New York, later today to spend some time with my good friend. It gets almost as cold there as it does where my grandma lives.

Sorry for the lack of substance. Americans talk about the weather a lot.

With care,

ZA

January 5, 2025

Dear Josias,

Sometimes I find myself caught in a worrisome loop of thinking, where I start to doubt that the things that interest me actually purport the universality I ascribe to them. Recently I have begun to think that this is actually not a problem in the work, but in the viewership of it. You know, sometimes there is an opacity which keeps things out, and other times the same opacity is what brings things in.

Wholeheartedly,

ZA

January 11, 2025

Dear Josias,

I'm preparing for an exhibition I have coming up in a few weeks, conjuring the metaphysics necessary to do such a dreadful thing. The word, too, even, *exhibition,* is such a drag. It comes with so much baggage. I suppose this life that we are living, as people who subsist on creative labor, also necessitates that we 'put ourselves on display', and are aware of how our display functions in varying settings.

It plagues me that I can never truly divorce myself from all that I truly am. How beautiful might it be to the wind, invisible but felt, dramatically subjected to every whim of the Earth, dragging along whatever you might as you pass by and recede into the oblivion from which you arose.

I get my daily exercise by brushing my teeth in the morning and forfeiting caloric substance to the dread of late, late nights.

What are you looking at right now? Can you describe it to me, whatever comes to mind first? Then, can you describe the things closest to it after that? And go wider and further until you can't imagine there being anything beyond it. Let's wrap up some of this time-space in soggy letters and call it our own. We need it.

Is irony cruel, Josias? Is cruelty ironic? All day bodies flailing and swarming in crowds, flooding out of one corridor into another, all totally assumptive one of their other, unsatisfied by something. And we belittle our dissatisfaction, calling anything we might respond to it with “irrational,” despite important factors like the absence of guardian angels.

Brown sugar is just molasses and white sugar. The sounds of humans challenging the machines. The wetness of rain. I imagine that shoes with one pair made a half-size larger than the other would be a good solution for someone with 11 toes. I crave the taste of aluminum foil that’s been chewed for 10-15 minutes, forgotten about, and then remembered after swallowing a few sharp, metallic drops of my own saliva. I think for a second that there are too many things on my walls at home, then realize that I am far away from there and cannot decide the decor or other arrangements from all the way over here.

Pensively, while pacing,

ZA

January 16, 2025

Dear Josias,

Photos of Elon Musk's SpaceX Starship falling to bright, flaming shards over Haiti's sky. The populations assemble. Over lines, over technological bridges.

If there was a future to anticipate, I would ask it to be one that considers me a light particle.

Clouds disperse. The sidewalk above the subway station rumbles. The soft stench of fresh urine and the almost negligible sound of its warmth cracking the ice in the niche of a big brick building.

Yours,

ZA

January 25, 2025

Dear Josias,

I found this image of a woman standing in Port-au-Prince today. It was shared online by someone by the name of Orlando Aurelian and dates back to the late 1960s. I imagine she was probably married and this was taken by her spouse. There is something so captivating to me about the way that she (and the landscape) are being measured and indexed by the red and white pole, almost as if she and the pole are facing off against one another to own and command space. I guess images are about the relation of light to space, and vice versa. The shadows and the mountains give us some clues about depth, distance, and time. A sundial is a camera, too.

Thoughtfully,

ZA

February 9, 2025

Dear Josias,

I made pickles the other day and today they are perfect. As I eat them I keep thinking about how the cucumber breaks down to kindly and graciously accept the brine and herbs. White vinegar, sea salt, cane sugar, basil, thyme, parsley, and olive oil. I am eating them on a bed of roasted leeks beside a lump of potatoes (half Yukan, half yam), and stir-fried chicken.

I was vegan for a long time, a couple years. My great grandma is a century-old and has been vegetarian for most of those years. I think it's important to listen to the body. It is the deepest plight of the Western philosopher perhaps, to contend with the mystical flesh vessel. I am pro-emotion, I think people should feel things. I guess we just have to be conditioned that way.

I'm drinking this funny chocolate milk that I made with a powder that a dear friend gifted to me. It's called *Banania,* and it has a little racist cartoon on the front. It was originally made for French soldiers during the Algerian War, I think. I like to put nutmeg and cinnamon in it and warm it up.

What did you eat today?

All the best and much more,

ZA

February 20, 2025

Dear Josias,

Today I went to visit the Stuyvesant-Fish House and saw fantastic paintings by a Haitian artist who shares an alma mater with myself—Paul Gardere. Stained wood in deep colors, flanked by reflections of glitter, with hardly any lines made between frame and image—total, fixed relics. Images of religious icons, wrapped in a historic home of British royalty. A tinge of something unnameable permeates that space between me, then pictures, and the bits and pieces of the building.

It's funny that sometimes we try to look for ourselves in others.

Yours,

ZA

February 25, 2025 *(BSU exhibition opening night)*

Dear Josias,

I wish you were here. Maybe that is selfish of me? Maybe it's considerate towards you? Still trying to find the line.

Yours,

ZA

February 27, 2025

Dear Josias,

Have you ever loved somebody so much that you felt like dying? Like, in a good way.

With wet, salty eyes and a wide smile,

ZA

April 19, 2025

Dear Josias,

4:18 PM. Standing outside the garden next to my job, I hear a woman passing by at right utter the statement,

“Take your curiosity elsewhere.”

As I gaze over my left shoulder, I come to see that she was walking with another woman. The first woman—the one who spoke—gives the leash to the other woman, the small dog at its other end unphased by it all as it dutifully struts along the sidewalk.

Yours

ZA

April 22, 2025

Dear Josias,

What a weird news headline. I'm sure you have heard about this. 200 years can go by before the boot squashing the neck below it begins to hear the wailing, then whimpering of the victim he created. I cannot applaud. There was a part of me that had to keep from crying as Macron's smug face tormented the pages of the Times. I think what made me sad is that he has the privilege to say "we were wrong," and because it will never be enough. No apology can take my mother home. Of course we, or they, can take her to Haiti—all over, to Jacmel, Port-au-Prince, to Gonaives—but nothing can take her *home*.

Josias, are you at home? Have you always been there, or did you arrive later on? What was that arrival like? What were the tastes and smells like? Was it scary?

I do not know if I have ever been home before. I think it's stubborn.

I am going to cook dinner and have tea and try to forget about everything that I cannot be.

Sending my love,

ZA

April 24, 2025

Dear Josias,

I don’t know at this point when to stop collecting my letters. I know it’s not about stopping, or starting, or any of that time-based stuff—just doing. But it’s so hard to grasp the present when it flees without any concern for how it might make me feel.

Some people think crucifixion is the answer to all the world’s problems, and who could blame them? Who could blame those bowing to the cosmos, eating lead, drinking sap?

My beloved is sick and he fears for his life. Josias, I wish I could bring him to you. I am cold and alone and the sound of his melodies rings in between my thick, bloody heart and my wispy little soul. My feet pound the ground as if to shake its foundation and I must fill my pockets with enough rocks to make two little mountains by my sides, holding me so I do not fall into the world face-first.

Josias, I wish love for my mother. I wish to color her world with dreams like all the ones she could never have. I want to color the world with dreams that kill fanged snakes and make cockroaches turn over onto their backsides.

When my love would bring me bread, we would let the porch finish the bread for us. The cement on our feet was like the stone-lined path to an all-encompassing darkness. We took each other there night after night, never afraid to lose one another in each other's mystique.

Our thoughts were like light-filled puzzles of fables, family relations, Anise star tea, and malted barley. Our bodies were two hordes of glass, thickening in the weightedness of our recollections.

I imagine holding him one more time.

I send salutations to his mother from my roof. Making intermittent prostrations, I beckon and plead and yearn and so on and so forth. 1 and 1 and 1 and 1 and 1 and 1 and—I draw circles around the other lines on the map. I anxiously pinpoint and categorize all of the images. I make horrors where there previously had been none and then spend the rest of the day stacking wooden boxes, leather robes, and calabash gourds onto the sides of a slow camel. I make slow pictures as she tarries, humming myself to sleep, in search of miracles.

If I find my love again, I want to find him delighted. I have made for him a garden of lilies unlike the ones here that get tired and old and falter, limp at the petals before the stems. I have made for him valleys of date palms and figs to feed a stadium. I have made for him plum wine and the roasted leg of a sheep. I have made him diagrams and plans of how we will be reconnected amongst those calculations which unceasingly plagued him. I have made him mansions and palaces. I have made him so many things that I then had to make a new palace to store them all.

I have made him two places for our mothers to sit and watch us grow and play with our sisters. I have made him hills and wide upon fields of lushness like the ones we used to hide

into when the turmoil of being overwhelmed us so. I have made for him velvet curtains and carpets of spider-silk. I have made for him endless depths along which we will affix our futures, and then fill up the holes one shovel-full at a time, singing tunes of wartime and victory. As I walk the streets in the early hours of morning, I think I hear the clatter of spheres sliding across a green felt table. I get a whiff of espresso. I feel my shoelaces coming undone.

I have things for him I do not yet understand. I cannot yet escape this verge. The problem of the self fades away. This is not my story to tell.

April 26, 2025

Dear Josias,

I am in Chicago now, just for a couple days. It's my third year working at this art fair, the EXPO, it's called. All four letters are capitalized to syntactically assert dominance.

Expositions.

I thought about writing to you all day, but failed until now. It's midnight and I am in bed. It's so hard to catch a break. While I was on the airplane, a child sitting behind me kept kicking my chair in incremental bursts. I wanted to be mad, but I was reading Derrida at the same time, and he was saying how—you know—language is far more malleable and unfixed than we perceive it to be, and meaning can be expressed through gesture to produce content in the sameway (if not better). So then I started to think about the situation as a kind of dialogue between me and the chair and this kid's shoe, and felt so much better about the whole thing. We were having a conversation; he was telling me about his boredom and sense of rhythm and maybe about the length of his body in relation to the adult-sized seats, which were probably more comfy for him (it's like a throne or something). And, in fact, I was responding to him, too. I was responding by refusal. I did not engage or express disdain, only a few times I did need to lean forward as the 1-2-1-2-1-2 impressions against my back were preventing me from focusing on the deep mindscape I was trying to traverse.

My mom has only been on a plane three times, I think. For a long time it was only one—in the 80s when she flew from Haiti to Florida. More recently she had gone on vacation in Florida with my younger brother and they flew together round-trip. At this point in my life I fly a few times a year; for work, to see family, to vacation. I usually have 'okay' experiences—the whole process is sort of a given, to me, so to speak. There is something spectacular about it, though, that I feel everytime. When I was a boy, my teacher, the Imam, told us that being on an airplane is a moment where you can easily see the meticulousness of God. He told us that it's a superb experience to order a cup of tea from miles in the air, and to set it down on a table, and to watch it sit totally poised and silent as this big machine modeled after birds and other real sky creatures circumnavigates the big blue-green ball.

The same kind of 'drama of the mundane' is happening at the top corners of the pages in the thesis I'm writing. A word appears in the top right corner, a mystical bastardization of an African word which found its way into Portuguese, then French, then Creole; a "forward" (i.e. right-leaning) slash denotes 'a preceding other' which retains a relationship to the former; a transliterated word sits there, a literal impossibility; and a pair of parentheses enclose a set of letters in a obviously "different" script, suggesting that it is a translation. Each time a page is flipped, a new number passes this headliner by, sinking deeper into abyss, past recognition and into defamiliarized territories.

I like the English term, "all the way." It suggests a lot.

Yours,

ZA

April 28, 2025

Josias!

It is nearly time for us to go live. I have been in Chicago for the past couple days on that work trip, but I arrived in New York today and found that our prints were in the mailbox. The timing is beautifully uncanny—I wasn't too worried about them not coming at all, to be completely honest. I think there is something particularly special to letting things "get lost," and take their own paths towards individuation and self-making. That is to say, do I *really,* in principle, need to exist for this to be true? Do you need to exist? I guess first we would have to define "existence," and that's always relative and mostly impossible. That would bring us back to the age-old question of God's physique. I don't mean to propose a kind of negative theology in which we characterize God by what he is not (namely, the mountains and the footprints—remind me about this story and I'll explain more next time), but a more positivist theology which names God but what he does and "who he is," so-to-speak.

I'm so proud of you Josias. Congratulations! I congratulate you over and over again until my tongue dries up, you young masterful ball of energy waiting to explode and give the world magic that it did not know that it deserved.

I send wishes of *barakat* and *salam*; of the line between here and there disappearing and becoming not unlike the sun obscured by a soft, blue haze as you walk along the shoreline and climb into your boat.

I will present the collective efforts of our labor with dignity, and hope to do well and just by your legacy amidst the fickle nature of words both written and spoken.

In the 11th section of the book that your boss, Kathy Brooks, wrote, titled "Repeated Humiliations to the Ego," (a reference to a quote by Carl Jung), she says, ***"****Language is the first source of cluelessness. Being a room full of people and having virtually no idea what is going on is humiliating at its best. Dangerous at its worst…"*** I feel that I relate to her comment from the opposite end of the stick. It is always strange to put oneself in a situation to try and conjure the faculties of language to express anything, especially something one cares about deeply. And she continues in the same section, ***"****…Kreyol is a full body language. It comes with hand signals and clicks of the mouth and a cool sucking-the-teeth thing. It is great for expressing outrage. "O mon Cher!" Imagine hands flipping up and a good teeth suck. It is also the language for prayer. I find when I get lost in prayer, really get to the high places, I often switch into Kreyol. Maybe my soul secretly knows that God plays favorites after all and the Haitian people are near the top of his list!"*

Without the privilege of speaking Kreyol fluently, I make prayers for you in the first language I prayed in as a child, Arabic. And I convey my love to you publicly in the one I use to communicate with most of my peers, English—trying my best to get around the caveats of letters and words.

Sincerely,

ZA

3a. Micivih (1993)

The Mission civile internationale en Haïti or International Civilian Mission to Haiti, commonly abbreviated to Micivih, was founded on February 9, 1993 during the coup d'état period. Its originally stated mission was to *"verify respect for human rights as laid down in the Haitian constitution and in international instruments to which Haiti is party; devote special attention to observance of the rights to life, to the integrity and security of the person, to personal liberty, to freedom of expression and to freedom of association. Following resumption of activities, Oct 1994: continue to give priority to monitoring and promotion of respect for human rights; as in the past, document the human rights situation, make recommendations to the Haitian authorities, implement an information and civic education programme and help to solve problems such as those relating to detention, medical assistance to victims and return of displaced persons; observe the forthcoming electoral campaign, during which monitor respect for freedom of expression and association and possibly participate in observation of the election itself; contribute to institution building, particularly the strengthening of human rights organizations; while continuing to verify compliance with Haiti's human rights obligations, contribute as far as possible to strengthening democratic institutions."*[104]

"After the departure of "Life President" Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1986, Haiti had a series of short-lived governments. In 1990, the country's provisional Government requested the United Nations to observe the December 1990 elections.

The United Nations Observer Group for the Verification of the Elections in Haiti (ONUVEH) observed the preparation and holding of the elections, which were termed as "highly

[104] https://uia.org/s/or/en/1100022998

successful" by the head of ONUVEH. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, of the National Front for Change and Democracy, was elected President.

But in 1991, a coup headed by Lieutenant-General Raoul Cédras ended democratic rule. The President went into exile. The Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations condemned the coup and began diplomatic efforts for the return to democratic rule. The Secretary-General, at the request of the General Assembly, appointed a special envoy for Haiti, Mr. Dante Caputo, who was also appointed separately as special envoy by the OAS.

In response to the worsening situation, and on the request of Mr. Aristide, a joint United Nations/OAS mission -- the International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH) -- was deployed in the country in 1993. Its task was to monitor the human rights situation and to investigate violations.

The special envoy sought to reach an agreement on the appointment of a Prime Minister at the head of a Government of national unity, an amnesty for the coup leaders and the return of the President. But his proposals were not accepted.

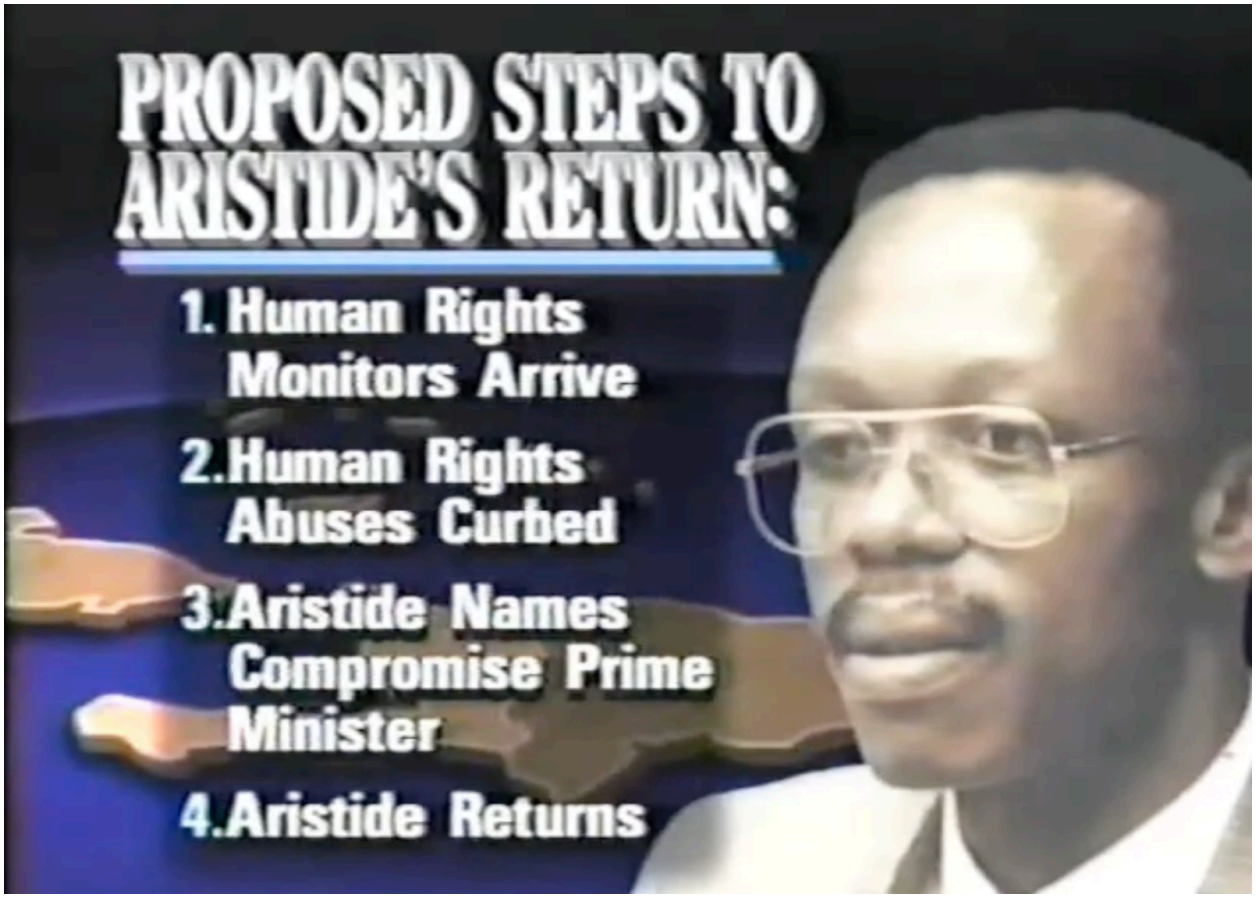
In an effort to restore constitutional rule, the Security Council imposed an oil and arms embargo on Haiti in June 1993. General Cédras then agreed to hold talks. Such talks, conducted in New York by the special envoy, led in July to an agreement: Mr. Aristide would return to Haiti in October and appoint a new head of the armed forces.

As provided for by the agreements, the Security Council suspended the embargo following the approval by Parliament of a new cabinet…"[105]

"Jimmy Carter, Sam Nunn, and Colin Powell, representing the U.S. government, mediated an agreement between the military junta and President Aristide on September 18, 1994. A US-led multinational military force (Operation Uphold Democracy) consisting of some 22,000 troops from 28 countries was deployed in the country on September 19, 1994."[106]

[105] https://peacekeeping.un.org/ru/mission/past/unmihbackgr1.html

[106] https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/western-hemisphere-region/haiti-1908-present/



Sec. 2; Fig 1.[107]

Still from a 1993 CNN Headline News report detailing the proposed UN OAS 4-step deal following Aristilde's exile.

The episode starts out showing the corpse of a Haitian man in the street, stating that he was killed for rallying in support of Aristilde. Then, Jesse Jackson's visit to the island is then highlighted. A man speaks about the increased murders, saying that even members of the clergy are being targeted. At the very end, carpenters are seen building large boats, anticipating more corruption to ensue, which would drive them to leave for the US and other nearby countries. The clip ends when a Haitian man says, "I would leave for Miami in a second, but there are coast guards posted there to stop me. I'll wait. I'm expecting changes with Bill Clinton as president."

[107] Archived by Quentin Melson and uploaded to YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdKYqSK8m7Q&list=PLOQNZ4bHolN6Cj84uBK6MCncNMSJvgVGV&index=106

Micivih would be dismantled and reconstructed a number of times, overlapping with the next four UN missions in Haiti between 1993 and 2000. Much death and corruption took place over these times. I am interested in how the militant joy and radical optimism of the Haitian people persisted amidst the instability of the state's political life.

The times and sites of celebration and commemoration often express the sentiments of the public. Kanaval (Haitian Carnival) is one such situation that offered a space for these expressive projects. Ethnomusicologist Gage Averill says, *"A debate in cultural studies and allied disciplines has raged over the political significance of carnival, and this debate spilled over...*

On one end of a spectrum of viewpoints is the "instrument of social control" theory, which holds that carnival diverts popular attention away from oppressive social realities...What was needed, I felt, was a larger body of local case studies exploring the political implications of carnival and its music-the local meanings of carnival that defy easy cross-cultural generalization. My own findings on Haitian carnival square with the more open-ended interpretation of carnivals by John Fiske, who notes a continuous presence of rebellious potential in carnival, a potential that can be set into motion by a sharpened level of political struggle."[108]

And this "rebellious potential" was made possible in part by that fact that: *"In Haiti it is forbidden for United Nations employees to attend carnival festivities, or defile, held annually in provincial towns (Jacmel, Aux Cayes, Cap-Haïtien), because entertainments and large*

[108] Gage Averill, "Anraje to Angaje: Carnival Politics and Music in Haiti" *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 38, No. 2, Music and Politics (Spring - Summer, 1994), p. 218-219. https://doi.org/10.2307/851739

gatherings of people have great potential to become dangerous. dance, always, is a radically unpredictable activity: lage ko'w, mete men nan lè, souke, vole [let go, put your hands in the air, shake, fly]."[109]

A New York Times article published on February 13, 1994, reads in part, "*While the army is often seen as the sole surviving institution in this shattered nation, another returns each year at this time: carnival.*

"Carnival is the only institution in Haiti that cannot be negotiated," said Abouja, a voodoo priest who is an authority on the country's popular culture. "The government that pulls off a carnival feels that it is securely in power, but history tells us that this is not necessarily the case."

"We're just dancing," a 20-year-old said, moving to the music and smoking a cigarette. "This is the army's party and we have accepted the invitation, but that is all."

Referring to the military leaders who are financing much of the celebration, another man said: "Let them finish up their money on the carnival, then maybe they will fall quicker. They can't kill all of us. One day they will have to go."[110]

The 1993 Kanaval was marked first by disaster. A report from February 21, 1993, images the conditions: "*Government television broadcast condolences from Haitian officials and Pope John Paul II. Announcers read lists of about 300 survivors from the ferry Neptune, which*

[109] Kari Rittenbach, "Let Me Entertain You," July 2013. In Dora Budor's *New Lavoro Magazine,* Venice, Italy. https://thecomposingrooms.com/research/reading/2014/NewLavoroMagazine.pdf
[110] https://www.nytimes.com/1994/02/13/world/for-haitians-the-carnival-must-go-on.html

capsized during a storm Tuesday night en route from Haiti's southern peninsula to the capital.About 1,000 people were crammed aboard the ferry on its 120-mile trip from Jeremie to Port-au-Prince. The exact count remains unclear, although the ship's agent had precise figures for the amount of livestock, poultry and other goods. The confirmed death toll rose to 275 on Saturday. Hundreds more who had been aboard the 163-foot-long vessel remained unaccounted for.

On Saturday afternoon, Haiti's state-run TV station showed a documentary on mysterious disappearances of aircraft and sea vessels in the Bermuda Triangle. But on closed caption, the station also displayed condolence messages for victims of the Neptune tragedy.
At Port-au-Prince's central plaza, builders and painters stopped working on Carnival bandstands as pre-Lenten celebrations were halted Saturday as part of a day of mourning declared by the government. The three-day Carnival begins Sunday."[111]
And as Kanaval 1993 did begin, it would become one of the most attended and well-remembered in history.

"Boukan Ginen [a popular ten-person band in Haiti, known for blending elements of traditional Haitian music with jazz and rock influences, a genre called mizik rasin (roots music)] *won the prize for best carnival song at the 1991 Carnival in Port-au-Prince, for their performance of "Pale Pale W", a song later released on their debut album, Jou a Rive* [released 1993/re-released 1995]. *The song title means "talk" and includes lyrics widely interpreted as supporting the presidency of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The band's music was*

[111] https://www.deseret.com/1993/2/21/19033191/haiti-honors-hundreds-killed-in-ferry-disaster/

suppressed by the military authority of the junta led by Raoul Cadras that ruled the country from 1991 to 1994."[112]

Another mizik rasin band with political lyrics expressing support for Aristilde, RAM, performed their track titled Agwé, named for the lwa of the aquatic world and maritime relations. An early line-up of the kompa band Djakout Mizik, a seemingly now defunct band called Ekla Ginen (Shining Ginen), and the genre-agnostic Mizik Mizik also performed. All of these events were filmed, sometimes heavily edited with digital effects, and later uploaded to YouTube. Even Michel Martelly, who was president of Haiti from 2011 to 2016, performed his song Pike Yo (Sting 'Em) under his stage name Sweet Micky.

112

https://compassrecords.com/artist/boukan-ginen/#:~:text=Boukan%20Ginen%20won%20the%20prize,presidency%20of%20Jean%2DBertrand%20Aristide.

Sec. 2; Fig 2[113]

Sweet Micky performs *Pike Yo* for the 1993 Carnaval live in Champs de Mars (the largest public park in downtown Port-au-Prince, historically used for military parades).

[113] Uploaded to YouTube by Carl Lochard.

"...I have dug deep in my archives and came up with this vintage 8 millimeter gem (No HD). This footage was filmed from the Big Star Market stand, next to Rex Theatre for those of you who know Port au Prince. T-Vice, before the band became "Met Beton" played on that stand that year.. Towards the end of the video, you can see the very young members of the band on and some other recognizable guests on the stand."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRDbkYR6hJg

And besides the musical energy, the spiritual energy also began to ramp up during the era of Micivih. Of course Christianity and Vodou continued to evolve as they had been, but this was also an era of new religious freedom.

The space where the second mosque ever built in Haiti (often mistaken as the first),[114] Masjid Al Fatiha (Al Fatiha Mosque), located at Delmas 18, Port-au-Prince, was purchased in 1993 and functioned as a musallah (single prayer room without a formal name) until 1995, when a man named Abdul Ali had donated half of his domestic land for the construction of proper mosque. It was designed by Pakistani national Muhammad Ameer who also funded a great deal of the project.

As the future UN missions in Haiti would profess, the energy of the mind was just as crucial as that of the body, and religious experimentation ran rampant.

[114] A house which was converted into a mosque by a group of locals and Moroccan nationals in 1985 is likely the first.

Sec. 2; Fig 3[115]

"Tucked away on a corner of the Haitian capital's dusty, congested Delmas Road, a modest white building bears a curious sign, painstakingly stenciled in green Western and Arabic script. In the lanes of the historic Carrefour-Feuilles quarter, a neighborhood that snakes up the mountains surrounding Port-au-Prince, a plangent, timeless sound echoes. Among the market women haggling over prices while portable radios blare popular Haitian "compas" music, the muezzin's call to prayer goes forth from a new Islamic masjid, or prayer center."

"Mosquee Al-Fatiha," it reads. "Communauté Musulmane d'Haiti."

[115] https://theislamicworkplace.com/2010/01/26/islam-finds-a-place-in-haiti/